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ABSTRACT

Beginning in 1981, a 3-year study examined implementation of decentralization in rural Alaska education; legislated decentralization had begun in 1975 largely in response to the Native self-determination movement. All rural local school administrators were initially surveyed. Based on their responses and other statewide data, four types of educational control were formulated: localized, regionalized, unified, and mixed. Using a 10% sample of rural schools, 28 schools were selected for more intensified field analysis during the 1981-1982 school year. Significant differences were found among the three relatively pure types of control with respect to the social and political conditions, school governance processes, and their associated outcomes. Although localization is the goal of the decentralization movement, only one-fourth of the schools fell in that category. Localization depended on several conditions: a stable local administrator who shared influence with the school board, had a positive orientation toward the local community, and respected its values; local boards or committees that represented major community interests, including faction, stability (low turnover) of the local board; a district superintendent supportive of local control; district policy which specified substantive, functional areas of school government in which local boards and administrators had deciding influence; and open district-level communication. (BRR)

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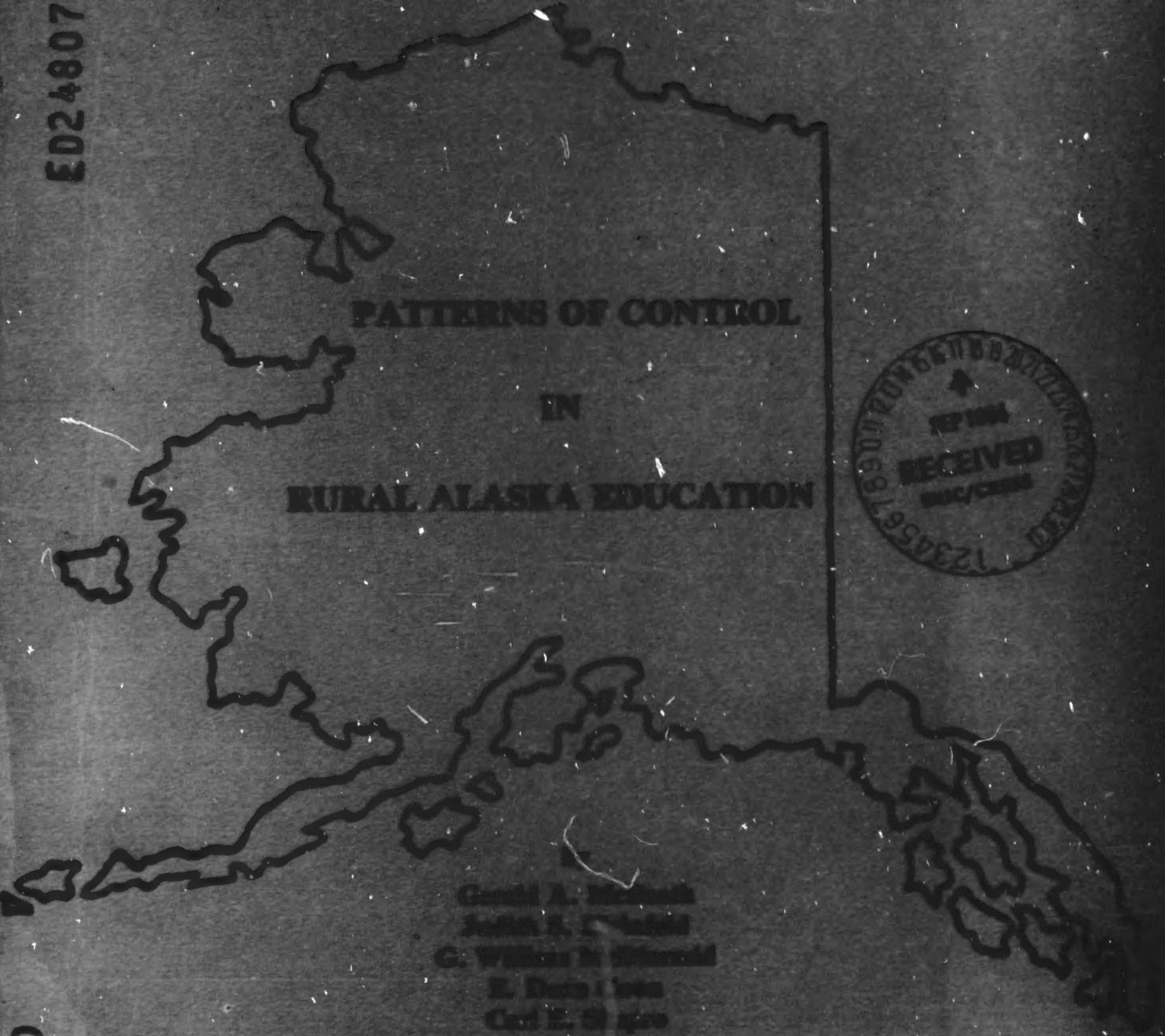

PATTERNS OF CONTROL

IN

RURAL ALASKA EDUCATION

by

Gerald A. McBeath
Judith S. Kleinfeld
G. William McDiarmid
E. Dean Coon
Carl E. Shepro

Center for Cross-Cultural Studies,
Department of Political Science, and
Institute of Social and Economic Research,
University of Alaska, Fairbanks

October 1983

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FINAL REPORT

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PATTERNS OF CONTROL IN RURAL ALASKA EDUCATION

Prepared by:

Gerald A. McBeath
Judith S. Kleinfeld
G. William McDiarmid
E. Dean Coon
Carl E. Shepro

Center for Cross-Cultural Studies,
Department of Political Science, and
Institute of Social and Economic Research,
University of Alaska, Fairbanks

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U.S. Department of Education
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April 1984

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The stereotypic problems of rural Alaska elementary and secondary education are lack of academic achievement, cultural relevance, and community support for schooling. For a host of reasons, rural students do not leave school with the same abilities in reading, writing, and computation as do their urban peers. That a majority of rural students are Alaska Natives, with distinctive social and cultural orientations and values, is frequently used to explain this condition. For equally numerous reasons, rural schools lack the institutional support in their communities possessed by urban schools. Again, the fact that rural schools are "alien" institutions in most places--run by Caucasians with different values and goals--is frequently mentioned as an explanation.

In response to the second phase of the Native self-determination movement in Alaska (a minor theme of which concerned educational organization and control), the Alaska state legislature decentralized the state-controlled rural school system in 1975. Contemporaneously, the federal government allowed more localized direction of the operation of BIA schools. These state and federal policy choices were partially based on the hypothesis that rural community control of education and direct involvement in the schooling process would lead to a significant improvement in the outcomes of schooling, especially for minority children. The national literature on educational organization and change, although based on urban case studies, encouraged the belief that students and parents would become interested in (and perhaps adapted to) the schooling process if it were subject to their control.

Our research agenda has been to study the implementation of decentralization in rural Alaska education: to determine what patterns of control emerged after decentralization, what factors were responsible for their development, and what association there was between these patterns and selected outcome measures. The research project we conducted over a three-year period is the first evaluation of significant organization changes in Alaska elementary and secondary education, and it is one of the few systematic studies of change in organizational processes of education in rural America. As is the case with most complex studies, the results of our investigation do not point simply to "success" or "failure" of organizational change in terms of its central purposes. Not only do we lack the longitudinal data to make such an assessment, but also we have found that the mediation of change through educational actors and institutions is the critical variable in determining satisfactory results.

We report on the results in the following eight chapters. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical relationship between educational change and schooling outcomes; it blends the literature on rural schooling and rural reactions to national changes with analysis of decentralization experiments in U.S. cities. Chapter 3 chronicles the process of establishing community schools in Alaska and analyzes the perceptions of school actors, monitors, and interest groups in the process of implementing federal and state decentralization policies. These chapters set the ground work for our study, which is described in some detail in Chapter 4. The remainder of the report describes what we found in different types of school systems. Regionally-controlled schools that appear to duplicate in regional settings the consolidated pattern of the state-operated system used before decentralization are the subject of Chapter 5. Chapter 6 describes the evolution of a locally-controlled system of education in some parts of rural Alaska, focusing attention on the ways in which these schools have responded to their communities, and the perceptions of school actors and community residents concerning the changes. In chapter 7, we examine schools operating under a "unified" system that most closely resembles centralized control. Chapter 8 carries analysis to that large group of schools in which the distribution and amount of control are in dispute. The report concludes, in Chapter 9, with several generalizations concerning the locus and amount of control in rural Alaska education derived from both case studies and statewide surveys.

A description of the rural Alaska setting introduces the context for organizational change. We then discuss the development of rural schools and the emergence of educational problems, including the confused perception about what schooling was to do that entered the political agenda in Alaska and nationally.

The Rural Alaska Setting

To consider the social and physical facts of rural Alaska objectively is to see few reasons for typical Western institutions of education at all. In most parts of rural Alaska, extreme environmental conditions discourage human habitation. Winters are long, dark, and extremely cold. Travel is usually difficult. Areas suitable for settlement are isolated from other communities. Those who live in rural Alaska are distinct in culture and motivation. After we have established a definition of rural Alaska we will look at this setting for rural educational institutions.[1]

The Meaning of "Rural" in the Alaska Context

The U.S. Census Bureau defines "rural" as those Alaska places having a population of fewer than 2,500 persons. By this definition, 35.7 percent of the state's 1980 population was rural.[2] The standard definition of rural used in Alaska is different. It defines rural areas as the residual category, after specifying as urban the nine boroughs which form around large cities, free-standing first-class municipalities (Cordova, Petersburg, etc.), and road system areas--encompassing some 80 percent of the state's 1980 population.

What is left becomes "rural." This definition is unsatisfactory to us, and we would add to the residual meaning a perceptual and behavioral one. There are fringe areas that are rural in attitude and life style (such as Salcha and Tok), and the reverse--seemingly rural areas that are firmly tied to urban economy and society. We want a definition that captures lifestyles and values, to establish the most authentic universe for our discussion of rural schools.

The basic meaning given "rural" in this and the following chapters is thus residual and behavioral: rural Alaska consists of the area of the unorganized borough plus outlying parts of area-wide boroughs, whose residents pursue rural lifestyles. We estimate this rural population to be approximately 100,000 or nearly 25 percent of the state's residents. We add to this definition the factors of sparseness of population, isolation from the state's largest cities and homogeneity of population.

Rural Alaska has few towns or villages with more than 100 families. There are exceptions, of course--Kotzebue, Barrow, Nome, Bethel-- each with populations in excess of 2,000. But most of the nearly 300 communities in rural Alaska have populations of between 100 and 500 inhabitants, and several villages have fewer than 100 inhabitants. The second meaning of rural is sparsely populated areas and the closeness of relationships which this implies--villages populated by blood relatives where each knows the business of all.

The third meaning of rural in the Alaska context is physical isolation from the state's largest cities and from influences of the contiguous 48 states. There is a continuum of isolation in rural Alaska: some villages, particularly those on the road system (or "drive-in bush," as it is often called), are little more than an hour's drive from an urban center, and increasingly appear to be drawn into the urban hub. At the other extreme are villages such as those in Western Alaska or the Aleutian chain, which can be reached only by small plane once a week. For the average rural Alaska resident, travel to Anchorage, Fairbanks, or the capital in Juneau requires time and money, and frequently depends on the vagaries of weather.

The fourth meaning of rural Alaska is ethnic homogeneity. Once rural Alaska meant exclusively Native Alaska, for most residents of the region were Indians, Eskimos, or Aleuts. A majority of places in rural regions are still inhabited by various Native ethnic groups, and more Natives live in rural Alaska than in cities, but there have been two changes in this pattern over time. First, a small number of communities were originally Caucasian "settler" towns, built on extraction of resources such as minerals, timber, and fish, or they began as military installations. These communities over time have attracted some Native residents. Second, the larger Native communities have become heterogenous, as increasingly larger numbers of Caucasians have migrated to them. These two factors notwithstanding, the average rural resident is far less likely to see people different from himself than is the resident of one of Alaska's cities. Moreover, rural areas remain the home land of Alaska's aboriginal cultures--expressed through blood relationships which frequently connect all members of a locality, and through rituals of sharing that reaffirm a sense of community and cultural identity.

It is primarily smallness, isolation, and cultural homogeneity of population that makes an Alaska place "rural" today. A discussion of the physical geography of rural Alaska and its economic conditions explains these factors.

Physical Geography of Rural Alaska

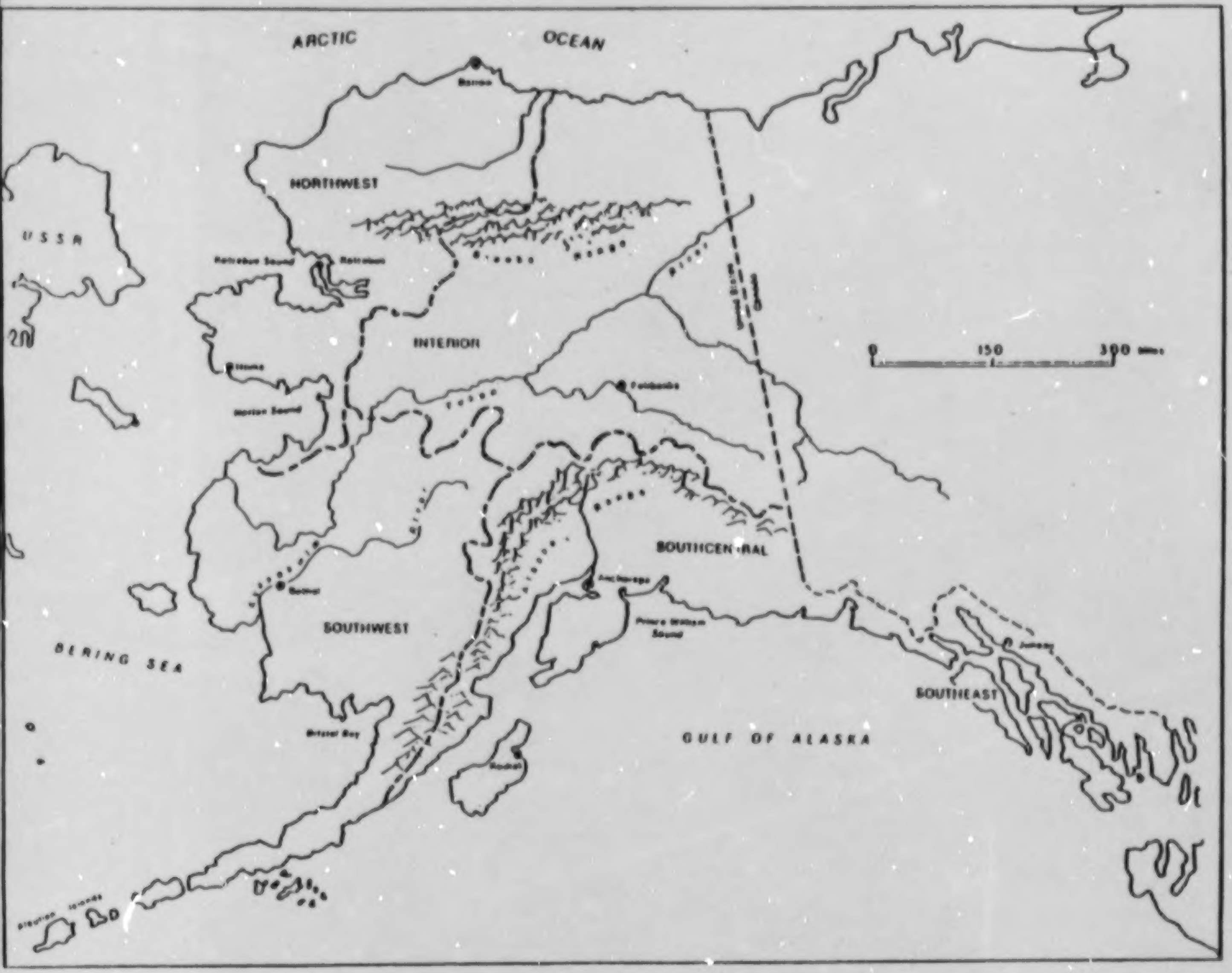
As the hinterland which surrounds Alaska's cities, the physical geography of rural Alaska is that of the state as a whole. The highest North American mountain--Mount McKinley--stands in Alaska, but this monument and the Alaska Range (the northwestern spur of the Rocky Mountains) are joined by other magnificent barriers--the Brooks Range that separates the North Slope from the rest of the state; the Wrangell and Chugach Mountains in southcentral Alaska; the Kuskokwim Mountains that divide western from southwest Alaska; and the St. Elias Mountains that set southeast Alaska apart from most of the state. These mountains impede communication and transportation, and physically isolate regions from one another (See Map 1).

Conditions of weather and climate discourage human habitation in rural Alaska. In all regions of the state except the Southeast and Aleutians, there are great extremes of temperature and weather throughout the year. The midnight sun of the North Slope lasts for four months each year, and summer temperatures reach 60°. For nearly three months, the sun is not visible. Winter temperatures, influenced by harsh winds off the arctic icepack, reach a chill factor of -120°. There is little moderation of these conditions in the Interior. Summer temperatures are warmer, sometimes reaching 90° in July and August, but winter temperatures are colder on the average. Gale-force winds hit the coastal areas and islands of the Aleutians and western Alaska. Rain and snow are less frequent in the Interior than along the coast and in western regions of the state. The rain forest climate of Southeast shuts out the sun for most of the year.

Within and around the mountains of rural Alaska are vast stretches of empty land. The north has treeless tundra, which is a blanket of color for moments in the arctic spring and summer, but it is normally an unbroken white. Below the Arctic Circle, the tundra landscape is dotted with trees, and divided by rivers and lakes in interior and western Alaska. The appearance of hospitality to man is deceptive, however, for the lands are underlain with permafrost--in continuous and discontinuous patches--and the soils are poor. They support agriculture only after a huge infusion of capital. Even the relatively simple business of constructing homes and other buildings is difficult because of the condition of the ground. In Southeast, and along the Aleutian chain, waters encroach on rocky terrain, and man fights nature for a place to live.

Physical geography, climatic conditions, soils--all have influenced the pattern of settlement (and, as we shall see, the development of schools) in rural Alaska. The original inhabitants of these

MAP 1--MAJOR REGIONS OF ALASKA


ARCTIC OCEAN
Barrow
NORTHWEST
USSR
Kotzebue Sound
Kotzebue
INTERIOR
Nome
Norton Sound
Fairbanks
0 150 300 miles
SOUTHCENTRAL
Anchorage
Prince William Sound
Bethel
SOUTHWEST
BERING SEA
Bristol Bay
Kodiak
GULF OF ALASKA
Juneau
SOUTHEAST
Aleutian Islands

regions tended to settle on the coast, along rivers, or in protected valleys. They did so because the species they depended on for survival were most abundant there. But they compromised with changing physical conditions, seen in the nomadism of the aboriginal populations before they came into contact with Westerners. As more non-Natives entered Alaska, and as a road system was developed to connect populated areas of the territory, settlement followed and become more permanent.

Harsh physical conditions have limited population growth in most parts of rural Alaska. Today, less than one-fourth of the state's residents live in this land area, which comprises more than three-fourths of the space of Alaska. But the harsh environment did not stop people from living where there were resources available for exploitation.

Resource Availability and Development Opportunities

The natural resources which can sustain life are not evenly distributed in rural Alaska. A brief description of the resources, the kinds of individuals attracted to exploit them, and future resource development prospects will tell us most about the setting of change and the environmental constraints on institutions such as schools.

Alaska's aboriginal population settled the land mass in pursuit of large mammals that migrated along the Bering Land bridge.[3] The Aleutians, and the western and northern coasts, were settled by Eskimoid peoples, who harvested seals, walruses, whales, and fish, and to a lesser extent land animals such as caribou, bears, sheep, and birds. These wildlife resources were finite, and this factor limited the population of the Native groups which pursued them. None of these species has been domesticated, and thus opportunities for subsistence use now are dependent on annual changes in animal and fish populations.[4] Today, no rural community in the state can subsist primarily on hunting and fishing pursuits, but the culture of subsistence use remains powerful and affects schooling in many rural areas.

Athabascan, Tlingit, and Haida Indians also relied to some extent on land animals for subsistence, but they were more dependent on fish, which explains their tendency to settle along rivers with productive fish runs (particularly salmon) and on those sections of the southeast coasts where sea resources were particularly abundant (See Map 2). Opportunities for development of this resource, especially for future commercial harvesting of fish species, are difficult to estimate. This makes uncertain the economics of the many small fishing villages in rural areas of the state.

Other natural resources of rural Alaska have been exploited since the nineteenth century, and their continued development and potential expansion depend on supply and demand conditions outside of Alaska. The presence of minerals--chiefly gold, silver, coal and lately zinc and molybdenum--brought overnight development to some rural areas of

MAP 2--NATIVE PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES OF ALASKA

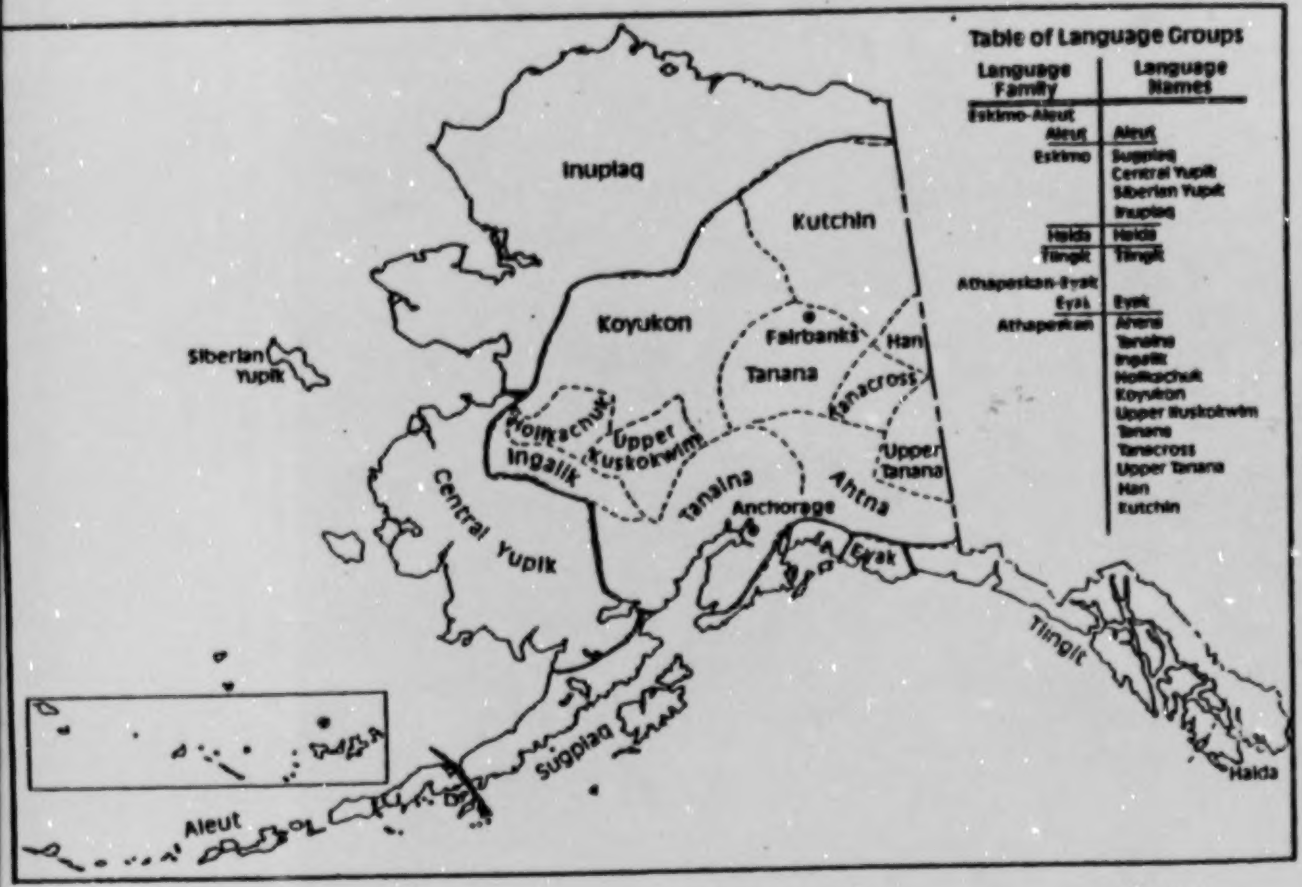

Inupiaq
Kutchin
Koyukon
Fairbanks
Han
Tanana
Tanacross
Holikachuk
Upper Kuskokwim
Ingalik
Upper Tanana
Tanaina
Ahtna
Anchorage
Siberian Yupik
Central Yupik
Eyak
Tlingit
Sugpiaq
Aleut
Haida

Table of Language Groups

Language Family	Language Names
Eskimo-Aleut	
Aleut	Aleut
Eskimo	Sugpiaq Central Yupik Siberian Yupik Inupiaq
Haida	Haida
Tlingit	Tlingit
Athapaskan-Eyak	
Eyak	Eyak
Athapaskan	Ahtna Tanaina Ingalik Holikachuk Koyukon Upper Kuskokwim Tanana Tanacross Upper Tanana Han Kutchin

the state. The best example is Nome, which was Alaska's largest city (with a population of 12,488) in 1900. Yet Nome nearly became a ghost town when gold supplies and prices declined. Minerals development in rural Alaska has resulted in two types of settlements: mining enclaves, which bear resemblances to the classic company town (seen most clearly in the early relationship of Alaska Gold Company to Nome and Usibelli coal mine to Healy); and small-scale communities of individual miners who stake and work claims, as in Livengood, McGrath, Central, and other Interior areas. Again, minerals are difficult and very expensive to extract under Alaska climatic conditions, and communities that exploit them are highly dependent on external forces of supply and demand.[5] These communities are distinctive from other rural places in that their population is predominantly Caucasian.

Oil and gas resources do not figure directly in the development pattern of rural Alaska, for petroleum exploration and exploitation is a high technology enterprise, conducted from industrial enclaves on the North Slope, and from urbanized communities on the Kenai Peninsula.[6] With the exception of the North Slope, the impact of oil and gas development has been indirect to the present--mainly through increased state spending. However, the prospect of new energy developments in other rural areas has heightened concerns about changes in traditional societies.

Southeast Alaska and to a lesser extent southcentral and interior rural regions of the state have abundant forests. As demand for wood products increased in Japan and East Asia generally, Alaska forest products became valuable. Exploitation of this resource brought Caucasian and some Native workers to rural areas and led to growth of communities. However, this industry has been depressed recently, and future development is dependent on factors extrinsic to rural regions of the state.[7] Economies of logging communities have collapsed in several areas as a result, and schools have been closed.

The general conditions for agriculture in rural areas of the state have always been inauspicious: soils are poor; climate and weather conditions are harsh, notwithstanding the long daylight hours of the growing season; transporting products to market is difficult and costly, because of the incomplete infrastructure of roads, rail lines, harbors; and markets--both within the state and internationally--are poorly developed.[8] Nevertheless, growth of agriculture in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley in the 1930s and 1940s, and development of the multi-million dollar state-assisted barley project in the Delta-Clearwater area more recently, have led to the formation of rural agrarian communities, in the sense in which this term is used in the contiguous 48 states.

Finally, the physical beauty and uniqueness of some rural regions have attracted tourists, and the tourist industry has grown in importance. But it is a major economic factor in few rural communities at the present.

Thus, a variety of resources support human habitation in rural Alaska, and a number of communities have been able to develop and capture economic benefits from the development of these resources. Such communities have seen their populations and community wealth expand, but this expansion is highly dependent on external demand for the resource. In general, however, resources are unevenly distributed and poorly developed in rural regions of the state. This factor explains the absence of a tax base in most rural areas (and the creation of an unorganized borough in which government services would be provided directly by the state). It is a major limiting factor in the development of fully autonomous communities with school systems that compare to those in urban America.

Population Characteristics

Generalizations abound concerning the differences between urban and rural Alaska, but as rural communities and regions differentiate over time, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw an accurate portrayal of the state's average rural resident.

If we paint in broad strokes, we can point out these major differences between rural and urban residents:[9]

- Rural residents have family and per capita incomes that are on the average $4,500 lower than those of urban residents.[10] Costs for commercial products on the other hand are from 5 to over 100 percent higher.

- The components of rural income diverge markedly from those of city families. Most rural residents hunt and fish for some part of their food whereas most urban Alaskans do not.[11] Furthermore, a greater proportion of rural income is made up of transfer payments from the federal government and state social agencies.

- Opportunities for full-time, year-round employment are available for only a small number of adult Native residents of rural areas.[12] Work is likely to be seasonal.

- For these and other reasons, rural communities lack the social and cultural amenities of urban Alaska and contiguous 48 states, and either through desire or default, residents have a hardier life style.

- Rural Alaskans do not have ready access to professional medical and dental care. Rates of infant and adult mortality are higher than those in cities.

- Rates of alcoholism, and other substance abuse are higher in rural than in urban Alaska,[13] and the impact of alcoholism on small scale communities is far more severe than in cities.

Such generalizations have to be used with a good deal of caution, however, because there are extreme cases today in rural Alaska. Some Native fishing villages have average annual family incomes of over $50,000, even though a great number have slim subsistence resources and must rely on transfer payments. Some mining communities have per capita annual incomes of more than $70,000, while logging communities are economically depressed.

Sharp differences between rural and urban Alaska are seen most clearly in the way school systems developed.

Development of an Educational System for Alaska Natives

Schools in rural Alaska were developed first during the Russian colonial period. The period of Russian education extended from 1785 to 1916, but its impact was limited to a small number of communities. It was superceded by the American dual system of education, established in 1905. This section describes the schools developed for Natives in rural Alaska, the antecedents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools still found in some 20 rural places as of the early 1980s.

For nearly 20 years after the Alaska purchase in 1867, education was provided by mission societies of American churches, Russian Orthodox schools, and by the Alaska Commercial Company (on the Pribilof Islands).[14] In the Organic Act of 1884, Congress made the Department of the Interior (and the BIA) responsible for schooling children of all races in the territory. Initially, this was done through public schools and "contract schools."[15] Then in 1905 Congress passed the Nelson Act that formally inaugurated the dual system of education in Alaska. The federal part of this system was to provide schools for Alaska Natives. Federal dollars paid for the schools, and a federal Department of Education controlled them. The territorial part of this system included both local school districts in incorporated towns and schools outside municipalities. The intent was that local and territorial dollars would support these schools.[16]

In the first three decades of this century, the BIA's Department of Education established schools in more remote sections of the territory. But three events of the 1930s affected the organization of Native education. An advocate of Indian self-determination, John Collier, was appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He was instrumental in bringing about the second event--passage of the Johnson O'Malley Act in 1934. This act promised financial assistance to states that provided public school programs for Natives (called JOM programs today), and it authorized contractual arrangements for the delivery of education services.[17] Third, in 1939, the Department of Education that had set up and administered schools especially for Alaska merged into the BIA system elsewhere. This action was in response to recommendation of the Merriam Report that all Native American education programs be administered by a single agency. Its effect was to bring Alaska's Native schooling under the general framework of objectives used for American Indians.

By the 1930s there had developed a framework of rural schools for Alaska Natives which were funded and directed by the federal BIA in Washington, D. C. There was a strong interest in the eventual transfer of these educational programs to the territory, but there were limited funds for this purpose.

Initially, the BIA schools were day schools which offered programs at the elementary level only. From the 1890s, some Alaska Native students began to attend the BIA secondary school in Chemawa, Oregon. (The peak enrollment period was from 1910 to the 1930s.) The BIA did not establish secondary schools in Alaska until the 1920s when secondary schools and vocational training programs were set up at Eklutna and Wrangell. The best known secondary boarding school was that established at Mt. Edgecumbe (in Sitka) in 1947.

The lack of secondary schools in almost all rural areas of the territory had a dramatic effect on village communities. Those who wanted to remain in their villages were denied the opportunity for any education past the eighth grade, and those who sought secondary education were cut off from their communities for at least four years, and frequently elected to remain outside the rural community.

The effect of BIA schools upon Native culture and languages has been studied.[18] The social and political impact of BIA education is less directly evident. The BIA school quickly became the most important institution in the village. It gave rural youth access to new information, and it controlled much of their time during nine months of the year. BIA schools were staffed universally by Caucasians who were for the most part new to rural areas of the Alaska territory and unfamiliar with Native cultures and values. Yet as controllers of the school environment, school teachers and principals had village influence. They, for example, were in a position to affect the orderliness of the village and its public activities.

In all cases, BIA school personnel competed with traditional councils and village elders for local political influence. In some cases, BIA personnel inspired the development of other organizations in communities, such as service and recreational clubs. In a few cases, BIA teachers pressed for municipal governments in villages. Thus, schools for Native children were the major agency for change of local culture and lifestyles.

Development of Territorial Schools in Rural Alaska

The formation of territorial schools in rural Alaska followed the development of new resources there, which brought large numbers of non-Natives to rural areas, particularly to the Southeast. In those areas where few non-Natives settled, the local BIA schools admitted non-Native children. Gold rushes around the turn of the century, however, resulted in large increases in the Caucasian populations of some regions (e.g., Nome). The Department of Education could not establish enough schools, because its funds were limited. Thus, in 1900 as part of the Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure for Alaska, Congress granted communities the authority to incorporate, establish schools, and maintain them through local taxation.[19]

The larger towns such as Juneau and Skagway did incorporate and establish schools (and school boards). However, communities too small to incorporate were increasing in number, and they also wanted some degree of local control over their schools. The Nelson Act of 1905 solved this problem by authorizing the establishment of schools outside incorporated towns.[20] But the new schools, funded by part of the federal fees received for licenses outside towns, were to be racially segregated. The statute said:

> The schools specified and provided for in this Act shall be devoted to the education of white children and children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life.

Natives were to attend federal schools, Caucasians to attend local and territorial schools.

The remaining elements of a territorial system of education were established in 1917: A Uniform School Act created a Territorial Board of Education and the position of Commissioner of Education. As the dual system evolved, dissatisfaction grew, especially in those villages where both territorial and BIA schools existed. Many sought the transfer of BIA schools to the territory. But the territory lacked revenues to support the federal schools. This defect was partially remedied in 1951, when Congress extended the provisions of the Johnson-O'Malley Act to Alaska.[21] Subsequently, a few more BIA schools were transferred to the territory without loss of federal funding.

Changes in Educational Organization upon Statehood

When Alaska became a state in 1959, little headway had been made toward merging the two components of the dual system of rural education into a single system. The organizational pattern of rural schooling was complex. There were BIA schools, some private schools, the rural state-operated schools, and two types of local schools in rural areas: independent school districts and incorporated school districts.[22] Education was the chief service that rural residents wanted, and the complex system perhaps satisfied this need. Certainly, the opportunity to establish a school district in any rural area with more than 100 persons that lacked a tax base, and to fund this with non-local monies was a disincentive to the formation of integrated local communities where the schools would coexist with other public organizations and services.

Framers of the Alaska state constitution were disturbed by the number of independent taxing jurisdictions in the territory--especially school districts. They sought to bring order to the development of government in the state through the creation of a system of local administration that would be decentralized but relatively uniform in provision of basic services. They specified that the state would have only two local government jurisdictions--boroughs and cities. Boroughs (strong, area-wide local governments) were to have compulsory powers of education, planning and zoning, and taxation. All schools within boroughs were to be organized in a school district responsible to the borough assembly (except in one case, Haines, where a third-class borough was established in which the assembly was the school board). First class cities outside boroughs were given compulsory powers of education, planning, and taxation too.

City schools were also to become part of a school district that would obtain local revenue from the city council.

Areas outside boroughs and first class cities, which in 1970 comprised nearly 90 percent of the state's territory, were left in the residual category called the "unorganized borough." Their local government affairs, including delivery of educational services, were the responsibility of the state legislature.

Following statehood, little changed with respect to the administration of rural educational affairs. An internal change in the Department of Education in 1966 did create a Division of State-Operated Schools, but this had little impact on Native education or the relationship between state and federal school systems.

In 1963, the legislature formed nine boroughs under provisions of the Alaska Constitution, and all local school districts within the boroughs as well as 32 state-operated schools in the new boroughs' boundaries were transferred to the borough districts. The state continued to operate 85 schools, serving approximately 2,300 students in rural areas, as well as schools on military reservations.[23]

Increasing interest on the part of rural Alaskans for a stronger role in local educational policymaking led to a significant change in 1971. The Alaska legislature created the Alaska State-Operated School System (ASOSS or SOS for short) and transferred operational responsibility for rural schools from the Department of Education to this unit. SOS was governed by a seven-member board appointed by the governor from areas served. The legislature provided for local advisory boards in communities where state schools were in operation.[24] This legislation implied that SOS would be a permanent district for state school operations in the unorganized borough. For rural Natives and non-Natives the action compounded the problems of the dual system.

Rural Education Problems in the 1970s

To Alaska Natives and Caucasian educators, the problems in rural Native society were at least in part the result of organizational patterns. The centralization of decisionmaking in both federal and state systems, but especially in the SOS, frustrated their desires to create viable local school systems; organize stable, responsive patterns of educational policymaking; improve student outcomes; and expand influence over the direction of educational change.

Rural residents had consistently sought the creation of viable school systems for small villages, and sought high schools as close to their homes as possible.[25] This commitment to local elementary and secondary schools has been a major impetus to organizational change in rural education. The difficulty lay not only in constructing new school facilities in villages (a controversial issue in state politics), and in staffing rural schools and assuring them a continuous base of resources, but also in developing alternative models for small local high schools. Thus the environment of rural school districts influenced directly the ability to achieve local control.

Neither the state SOS nor the BIA system was thought to be responsive to parents and children in rural areas of the state. Decision makers in both systems were distant from local schools. They did not understand local situations and made poor decisions. The curriculum was decided upon centrally and was often inappropriate. Actual control over local operations was left in the hands of teachers and professional administrators. Most of these individuals were not adapted to the communities and regions they served, nor accountable to them. The Alaska Native Needs Assessment (ANNA) project summary called for local control of schools, and emphasized the continuing need for technical assistance to support local control.

Schools in rural Alaska have served a student population that is markedly disadvantaged in standard academic skills. There is a wide gap between reading and verbal skills (in English) and mathematical abilities of rural and urban youth and, within rural populations, between Caucasian and Native students. Native youth have been disadvantaged by the failure of the state and nation to develop school programs preparing them for entry into a changing skills market and national social life. The ANNA project summary mentioned the growing desire of Native students to attend and succeed at college, and for vocational and career education opportunities in and beyond high school.[26] These factors and pressures for achievement also lay behind the movement for organizational change in Alaska education.

But pressures for student achievement conflicted with equally strong pressures to maintain and strengthen Native culture. In the late 1960s, the general educational goal of Native adults and students was that the school should help equip the individual to get along in either the Native or non-Native culture, whichever the Native child should choose.[27] By the middle of the decade, the school system also had become the arena in which the survival of Native culture was debated. There were conflicting, irreconcilable demands--teach standard English, preserve Native languages, and maintain village English--and specious, glib solutions. The school in Alaska as nationwide was to handle society's problems. It was not clear what political leaders, administration, parents, or the professional reference group thought it was most important for the school to accomplish. Local control could have clarified these demands.

These, then, were the problems and conflicts surrounding rural Alaska education in the 1970s. The extent to which the debate was expressed in terms of organizational change and community control, however, was a consequence of the national debate (and academic inquiry) on these matters, to which we turn.

NOTES

1. This and the following section are condensed and revised versions of McBeath, "Rural Alaska: Setting and History," Chapter 8 in Morehouse, McBeath, and Leask, Urban and Rural Governments in Alaska. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, forthcoming 1984.

2. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

3. For histories of the pattern of Native settlement in Alaska, see Wendell Oswalt, Alaska Eskimos. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967. Aurel Krause, The Tlingit Indians. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968. Henry Collins, The Aleutian Islands. Washington: The Smithsonian Institution, 1946.

4. George Rogers, "The Nature of Rural Economic Development in Alaska," in Peter Cornwall and Gerald McBeath, Alaska's Rural Development. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982, p. 10.

5. C.C. Hawley and J. W. Whitney, "The Economic Importance of Small Mining Businesses in Alaska," U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin, 1907, (1978).

6. David Kreske, Thomas Morehouse, and George Rogers, Issues in Alaska Development. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982, pp. 114-118.

7. Rogers, 1982, p. 13.

8. C. Lewis and W. Thomas, "Expanding Subarctic Agriculture in the United States," Interdisciplinary Science Reviews, Vol. 6, 1981.

9. Studies pointing out the urban/rural difference in Alaska include: U.S. Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, Alaska Natives and the Land, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968; U.S. Department of the Interior, 2(c) Report: Federal Programs and Alaska Natives, Portland, Oregon, 1973, Tasks I-III; Alaska Native Foundation, Alaska Natives: A Status Report, Anchorage: 1977; and studies of the Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska, particularly, William Alonso and Edgar Rust, "The Evolving Pattern of Rural Alaska," 1976, and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 1971-1979, Policy Recommendations, May 1979.

10. State of Alaska, House Research Agency, "A Comparison between the Unorganized Borough and the Organized Borough with regard to Individual Income and State Expenditures," April 17, 1980. Whereas 1976 adjusted gross per capita income in the unorganized borough was $3,430, in unorganized boroughs it was $7,954. The 1978 per capita personal income was $7,662 in the unorganized borough compared to $11,109 in organized boroughs.

11. See Kruse, Kleinfeld, and Travis, Energy Development and the North Slope Inupiat, Anchorage: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska, 1980. Kruse et al. found that 70

percent of the North Slope Inupiat, a people perhaps more subject to the impacts of modernization than any other rural group in Alaska, continued to use subsistence species, which comprised an important part of their diets. Two-thirds of the people interviewed in a survey in the NANA region in northwest Alaska indicated that they hunted for at least half their meat. See State of Alaska, Office of the Governor, the Alaska Public Forum, NANA Survey Summary, May 1979, p. 1.

12. The NANA survey (1978, p. 5) found that only 8 percent of the Native population of that region was employed full-time. The vast majority worked part-time (45 percent) or were unemployed (47 percent).

13. Several studies have indicated the rates of alcohol and other substance abuse in rural Alaska as compared to Alaska's cities. Among these, a recent and controversial report is that of Samuel Klauser, et al., Social Change and the Alcohol Problem on the Alaska North Slope (Philadelphia: Center for Research on Acts of Man, 1980).

14. This chronology is based primarily on Don M. Dafoe's The Governance, Organization, and Financing of Education for Alaska Natives, Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, University of Alaska, 1978, pp. 8-35. Also see Carol Barnhardt, Historical Status of Elementary Schools in Rural Alaska Communities,1867-1979, Fairbanks: Center for Cross Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, 1980, pp. 1-4.

15. The Department of Education contracted schooling in many communities to missions--Catholic and Protestant (Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, and Swedish-Evangelical). The process of discontinuing this practice began in 1894.

16. Frank Darnell, Alaska's Dual Federal-State School System, Michigan: Wayne State University, 1970, pp. 157-158.

17. David H. Getches, Law and Alaska Native Education, Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, University of Alaska, 1977, pp. 6-7. See also act of June 4, 1936, H. R. Statutes 145, 25 U.N.C.D.S. 452.

18. See, for example, Charles K. Ray, et al., A Program of Education for Alaska Natives, Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1959; Ray, Alaska Native Secondary School Dropouts, Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1962; and Don M. Dafoe, "Some Problems in the Education of Native People in Alaska," Stanford: unpublished paper, Stanford University, 1959. The early practice of BIA teachers was to discourage and in some cases to punish students for use of their Native languages, which affected the retention in the younger generation of these languages, and deeply affected the status of "Nativeness" among rural villagers. This system had the effect of acculturating Native youth to Western society.

19. Barnhardt, 1980, p. 2.

20. Dafoe, 1978, p. 13.

21. Dafoe, 1978, p. 25.

22. Territorial legislation of 1935 authorized the establishment of school districts including within their boundaries cities and contiguous areas, provided that no district covered more than 500 square miles. In 1937 the territorial legislature authorized the incorporation of school districts anywhere outside the limits of incorporated cities, provided the areas had populations of 100 or more. See Barnhardt, 1980, p. 4.

23. Dafoe, 1978, p. 30.

24. Dafoe, 1978, p. 37.

25. *Alaska Native Needs Assessment in Education (ANNA)*, Juneau: Bureau of Indian Affairs, U. S. Department of Interior, 1974, p. 1.

26. ANNA Project Summary, p. 1.

27. ANNA Project Summary, p. 2.

CHAPTER 2. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND COMMUNITY CONTROL OF EDUCATION

The manipulation of organizational control and the impact of organizational change on school outcomes is a controversial topic in both educational research and practice. This chapter presents a sketch of the theoretical investigations into organizational issues in education. It also discusses the experiments in school district decentralization of the 1960s and 1970s, and describes research findings that seem to pertain to rural schools. The chapter concludes with an examination of the movement of national social issues to Alaska and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, which were the impetus for decentralization of rural schools.

The Organizational Context of Education

Three broad streams of academic research in the social sciences provide a framework of ideas for the analysis of rural educational organization in Alaska. First, a generation of sociological research on the structure and behavior of organizations has generated hypotheses about interorganizational relations and the interaction of environments and organizations. Second, the expanding field of study called the "politics of education" has explored organizational goals and effects at a less abstract level concerning, for example, power relations between superintendents and school boards. Third, middle and narrow range studies of decentralization of government services, particularly education, have interpreted the way in which organizational change affects service delivery.

Organizational Behavior and Change

Organization theory research sets broad, macro-analytic parameters for the analysis of educational institutions. There are a large number of studies in this field, and several approaches to answering the question of the impact of organizational change on human behavior. The reigning paradigm since the Second World War has been that variance of human behavior in organizational settings can be accounted for by intraorganizational variables, such as bureaucratization and other factors. This approach has united researchers from different disciplines and vantage points. Although few of the researchers considering the internal structures and functioning of organizations have followed an explicitly "closed system" approach, the range of consideration given environment factors in this perspective is limited. For example, a recent and highly influential theoretical statement by Blau[1] considered the organization's size to be of far greater importance than its environment, technology, or uncertainty in explaining structural differentiation of organizations.

A great deal of research also has been conducted on the nature of organizational processes, taking environmental factors as given[1]. The Weberian rational model of bureaucracy continues to excite interest and spur the tracing of interrelations among characteristics of organizations.[2] However, the connections between structure and process of an organization and its goals, conceived in terms of incentives and costs,[3] has not led to generally accepted models of social subsystems, such as the educational subsystem.[4] Partial models of rational decision making processes are drawn from the Weberian perspective, and these have been adapted much more easily to research into decision making in school districts.

As a supplement to or substitute for rational models, researchers have proposed social psychological and political approaches, all of which concentrate on relationships of power and authority in organizations. Crozier[5], Hickson et al.[6], and Child[7], among others, have focused on those individuals in organizations who derive power from their control over scarce resources and sources of uncertainty. This treatment of power as the opposite of dependency is positional, not structural, which limits its use in comparative studies. Also, most of these studies tend to combine analyses of authority and influence instead of identifying the separate sources of each as Gamson recommends[8].

One exception to this pattern is Tannenbaum's research on control in organizations. He criticizes the dominant focus on the relative distribution of control among different echelons of organizations, and argues that theoretically, organizations may also differ in their total amount of control.[9] The assumption of a variable amount of control seems particularly applicable to loosely structured organizations such as schools and school districts where participation of the "rank and file" (teachers) is usually encouraged. The impact of different distributions of control has been studied in the politics of education literature, but the implications of variable amounts of control on school outcomes such as student retention and achievement have not.

Recently popular analyses of interorganizational change have questioned the organizational system paradigm. Weick[10] described the normal pattern of organizational action as "loosely coupled," meaning it violates the requirements of linkage assumed in systems theory. Cohen, March, and Olson[11] developed the "garbage can model" of organizational decision making as a corrective to the rationalist perspective. Applying the concept to schools, Meyer and Rowan[12] contended that "the bureaucratic standardization of ritual classifications" of schooling had "little impact on the actual instructional activities of local schools."

These criticisms have led to an increased focus on environments of organizations. An early theoretical work that influenced the evolution of the "open system" viewpoint was Thompson's Organizations in Action[13]. Thompson considered organizations to be dependent because of ambiguity and uncertainty in their environments; nevertheless, they were systems that strived for certainty. Discussion about the environment of the organization, the network of interacting organizations, including the particular role of "focal organizations," is classified by Aldrich and Pfeffer[14] into two approaches: the population ecology and resource dependent perspectives.

The population ecology or natural selection perspective is applied to the population level of organizations. It suggests that environmental factors select those organizational characteristics best fitting the environment[15]. This perspective explains organizational change through three stages adopted from the biological metaphor: organizational variations occur; some are eliminated while others are selected; the variations selected influence organizational structure and process over time. The perspective directs attention to the force field of organizations, and it applies particularly well to schools, which are multi-pressured social organizations.

The second approach, called the "resource dependent perspective" by its author, Pfeffer[16], gives greater attention to political decision making processes that occur within the organization. It argues that organizations seek to manage or strategically adapt to their environments. One element of this theory related to school organizations is the proposition that administrators may engage in more activity managing their environments than controlling their organizations[17]. Another element, of broader applicability, is that organizational decisions and actions are determined by the "enacted environment"--that set of definitions of the world or orientations developed through the organizations' attention processes.

Overlapping the resource dependence perspective is the transaction approach, illustrated in the work of Williamson[18] and Warwick[19]. This approach posits that organizations are in constant interaction with their environments, and that these interactions affect their structures and processes. The approach presents organizations as potential maximizers that learn from interactions.

In recent years, researchers have begun to apply both closed and open system models to the analysis of educational organizations. We have selected from this literature two approaches that seem particularly appropriate to the conditions of rural Alaska education. The first is a focus on both the distribution and amount of control in rural educational organizations. The second is the concept of incorporating environments into organizations, which is applicable to the process of localization in rural Alaska education and the apparent deprofessionalization of Caucasian educators we discuss in Chapters 4-6.

Politics of Educational Organizations

Who has power over what and with what effects is among the oldest questions of politics, and one that has been asked with increasing frequency of school systems. This literature divides roughly into studies of the school or school district as a formal organization (its administrative behavior), research into the power, participation, and influence of educational actors[20], and attempts to formulate a political system of the school or district.

Studies of formal organizational aspects of the school have influenced conceptual and empirical work. The school is viewed as a rational system of units (boards, superintendents) pursuing a common goal, units that are interlinked. The structure of the organization (for example, its size, span of control) and work activities (for example, communication) are subjects of analysis[21]. The holistic approach has been used to describe school administration, however, the approach is subject to the shortcomings of "closed system" perspectives in organizational behavior discussed above. Weick[22] applies his "loosely coupled systems" approach as a corrective, and studies following this lead have concluded that administrative arrangements are loosely coupled to the technical core of public education[23]. As mentioned, the study of administrative control has focused on the impact of different distributions on performance, and has not considered the impact of variation in amount of control.

Studies of individual school actors are numerous, with perhaps greatest attention focused on school boards. In 1958, Gross conducted research on attitudes, perceptions, and role orientations of boards and superintendents.[24] A recent assessment is Cistone's edited book on school board.[25] This study presents a comprehensive view of boards, their sociopolitical environments, their authority relationships, their institutional growth and change. Among the authors, Boyd suggested variables that influenced the conduct of board-staff relations: community characteristics (political culture, educational expectations, history of school/community conflict), characteristics of school authorities, school government factors (degree of fiscal independence), school system factors (vulnerability of system, quasi-professionalism), resources (knowledge, information, management resources, and the community's demand for representation). The list of variables with a potential impact on educational policymaking is long. But one shortcoming of the approach was that it failed to "clarify the relationship between educational policy processes and policy outputs[26]." The extent and effect of participation is a critical variable, and several studies have pointed out the ways in which it influences both administrative and political control of schools. Lutz and Iannoccone[27] focused on conflict, especially that induced by differences in political culture and declining economic resources and related this to results in school board elections. They present empirical data showing that there is an "episodic adjustment (through elections) of school district policy to the will or value of the larger community." The notion of "episodic adjustment" is one we will apply to rural Alaska, but because use of elections is recent, we will also look for other forms of community dissatisfaction. Salisbury considered the more ephemeral topic of citizen participation in education, addressing the outcomes so far as individuals were concerned. His conclusion was:

> Citizens who participate in school affairs remain positive in their supportive attitudes toward the schools, trusting in the general probity and effectiveness with which the schools are

> administered, and confident about their ability to have some influence over the course of educational policy.[28]

This pattern of effects of participation in school politics is an implicit pattern of comparison for our research in rural Alaska.

Perhaps the most sophisticated,partial study of actors was that of Ziegler and Jennings,[29] which looked at the interactions between school board, superintendent, and the public. The authors used a nationwide sample of districts and examined recruitment to the board, linkages between district environment and board, and conflict/cooperation between boards and superintendents. A major finding of this study was that school boards were insulated from the public: lay boards were almost wholly dependent on superintendents for information on which to base decisions. This view has been challenged in more recent research, and it provides us another standard of comparison to the situation in rural Alaska where communities are smaller and decisionmaking is more likely to be done by consensus. A further study by Tucker and Zeigler[30] again spoke to the issue of "professional control" over lay boards, and this is an important critical observation to emerge from nearly a generation of research on the politics of education. This research has been criticized by Bacharach, however, for its deemphasis of the overall governing process, and of the consequences for school district policy making of political activity.

Conceptions of the political system of the school obviously pay greater attention to exogenous variables. Wirt and Kirst[31] proposed the adoption of a political systems framework in 1972.[31] In later studies, Wirt specified the various "constituents" of the school[32] and examined the major pressures weakening the power of governing authorities[33]: changes in the intergovernmental context, increased pressure group activity, increased professionalism of teachers and administrators, and the differential effects of political culture. Thompson also presents a conceptualization of the school district as a system.[33] Bacharach analyzes the theoretical sophistication of these approaches, and concludes that what is needed is a marriage of formal organization and open system perspectives. His "political analysis of the school system" is an important synthesis of concepts in the field of politics of education. It affords researchers the latitude of examining relationships of greatest interest to them while being able to connect these to a broader process of administration and politics. Of importance to our research, Bacharach points out several ways in which decentralization of structure hypothetically affects political processes of the school system.

Decentralization of Governmental Services

A third area of literature relates directly to problems in rural Alaska education that stimulated our research: what effect if any do political and administrative arrangements have on educational outcomes? This literature developed in response to practical concerns of urban service consumers; it describes results of experiments related to the "great school wars" of the 1960s. To describe the literature, it is necessary to look back at those events.

Political Impetus to Decentralization. Urban minorities who had developed political consciousness and a capability to organize during the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s felt they had been shortchanged in the social change processes of earlier decades. Their involvement in Great Society programs, for example, in community action programs that encouraged their "maximum feasible participation," brought them into an awareness of the potentialities of their community's control of important functions such as education.

Too, urban taxpayers in general wondered what they were getting for their tax dollars: national social welfare programs seemed inefficient; municipal services of health, education and welfare, the administration of which was centralized and remote, did not seem to deliver results. These concerns, criticisms, and conflicts exploded in the late 1960s in a series of community control controversies. Ultimately the issue of who should control schools in New York City and the Decentralization Act of the New York Legislature in 1969 brought national lay and professional attention to the role of organizational change in affecting educational results and to the concepts of political and administrative decentralization particularly.

Findings from Studies of Decentralization of Urban Services. A host of studies have reported on these decentralization experiments conducted in the 1970s in urban America. Setting the historical background for decentralization was Cronin's 1973 interpretative review of fourteen urban systems and their changing patterns of control.[35] General, single case studies[36] chronicled the rich history and complex context of the New York decentralization law. Zimet (1973) was one of the few to conduct an in-depth study of a single school district in New York.[37] He specified measures of effectiveness such as improvements in achievement test scores, and found that the district showed little improvement, which he attributed to a lack of substantial change in mode of school control: the New York law had produced two conflicting systems of governance in the schools--a top-down emphasis on administrative decentralization and a bottom-up emphasis on community control--which resulted in minimal change in educational or administrative effectiveness.

Gittel's comparative study, Six Urban School Districts[38], identified the conditioning role of fiscal status and measured the outputs of innovation and school system flexibility. Of particular relevance, she found the degree of openness--nature of power and public participation--to be directly related to innovation in two cases studied. In her several studies of the effects of decentralization in New York City, she found no redistribution of power in school decision making, but she noted significant changes in client participation. Many active participants went on to participate in other areas of municipal politics. LaNoue and Smith, in their survey of decentralization in five cities, concluded that "No significant evidence exists about the relationship of decentralization to student achievement."[39]

Evaluation of the case studies of decentralized school systems formed an important part of the study, *Street-Level Governments*, by Yin and Yates. They examined the impact of weak, moderate, and strong decentralization strategies in five service areas (safety, health, multiservice, education, and economic development) and assessed decentralization outcomes within each service area. They concluded that "successful decentralization is directly related to the strength of the decentralization strategy and is inversely related to the degree of professional and bureaucratic control over service policies."[40] Specifically regarding education, they found "a tendency for weak forms of decentralization to produce service improvements (improved reading scores, for example) but not increased client control (even of a weak nature) and for strong forms of decentralization to produce increased control but few service improvements (even of a minor nature)."[41] In short, the early, extensive studies of organizational change in urban education were not sanguine about the efficacy of administrative tinkering.

There is a different set of findings with respect to studies of citizen participation in education. Davis argues convincingly that increased participation affects five areas of educational results: 1) it leads to institutional policies that are more responsive to needs of constituents and communities, 2) it improves the nature and quality of educational services, 3) it helps develop a sense of efficacy and confidence on the part of constituents of citizens' organizations, 4) it *can* contribute to improved performance by students, and 5) it *can* contribute to making citizen organizations more effective.[42] However, empirical support is generally lacking for these hypotheses, with the exception of the recent analysis of decentralization in New York City by Rogers[43]. This project analyzed the implementation of the New York law in the city's new school districts. Much of the study reports on case studies of districts representing variation in class and ethnicity, and there is a sensitive portrayal of changes in political stability. One generalization of this study is that policies of decentralized districts, such as the hiring of paraprofessionals, became more responsive to consumers and led to greater community involvement in most instances. A second generalization was that test scores did not decline under the new, partially decentralized districts. Rogers' main thesis is that the process of implementation, especially the role of the superintendent, is a critical variable in determining successful outcomes.

Applications to Rural and American Native Education. Less attention has been paid the impact of decentralization in nonurban locales, but the logic of organizational analysis applies there equally well. Rural school consolidation has produced large, centralized systems, with limited decisional control in small towns; and the decentralization strategies of the 1960s seemed appropriate to (and were applied in) some rural places. Considerably less information has been accumulated on the fate of these experiments, however. In fact, a leading assessment of the state of rural education, Sher's *Education in Rural America*, mentions only one case and that concerns the intent of the Vermont State Department of

Education to consolidate all public school districts in America's "most rural state."[44]

A large part of the population of rural areas in the Southwest and Western states is non-Caucasian, and the development of organizational strategies bringing control to towns and villages has been high on the agenda of leaders of minority groups. Studies of the impact of increased participation opportunities (as a result of decentralization) on black Americans indicated that minority students' achievement in reading was associated with strong involvement of parents in the reading program and in other school activities.[45] Strong arguments have been made for decentralization of consolidated schools on Navajo reservations to "allow Navajo parents to have real control of their children's education"[46] and increase education effectiveness. Thus, although organizational change might induce few qualitative improvements in the education of a majority Caucasian population, its impact might be significantly different for non-Caucasian Americans.

National Currents and Changes in Remote Regions

In important respects, the development of education in rural Alaska has mirrored national processes. A cycle of decentralization-consolidation-decentralization has operated within an overall framework of increased integration of ethnic minority (Native) and Caucasian educational systems. As mentioned, the dual system had become a target for elimination by the 1960s. Educators pointed to the need for special programs for Natives and a single, distinctive structure for rural schools. State officials agreed in principle to merge rural schools into a single, state-controlled system. But it was the emergence of Native groups which made these issues salient and forced a change in educational organization. And the emergence of Native political organizations in Alaska was largely a consequence of national currents of social change.

National Social Action Agencies and Rural Organization

The pattern of change in rural areas of the state was initially one of passive reaction to nationwide pressures reaching Alaska during the 1960s combined with strong reactions to state-initiated pressures on rural areas.[47] From this, organizations and aggressive strategies for Native and local control developed.

This decade of change began with activities of directors of the American Institute of Indian Affairs, particularly the work of Henry Forbes and LaVerne Madigan. They visited Eskimo communities in northern Alaska in 1960 and 1961, and while there helped initiate three significant events and processes. First, they assisted the Natives of Pt. Hope, who were then worried about the plans of the Atomic Energy Commission to dredge a harbor at Pt. Hope with nuclear charges, in a plan called Project Chariot. Second, in the process of helping villagers protest this action, they worked closely with Howard Rock, and encouraged him to found the first Native newspaper of the state, the Tundra Times.[48] Third, they inspired and assisted in the formation of a pan-village organization on the North Slope, the Inupiat Paitot (Our People Speak), which was a forerunner of the Northern Alaska land claims associations.

A broader process of change occurred through the movement to Alaska of the national War on Poverty and the ethos of the civil rights movement. By 1965, a statewide program had started, first through the governor's office, and then as an independent, non-profit agency of the state. Under the War on Poverty umbrella, a large number of programs were brought to rural villages, which had the effect of increasing mobilization and organization there. These included: Operation Grassroots, Community Development Corporations (CDC), Headstart programs, Volunteers-in-Service-to-America (VISTA), and Community Action Programs (CAP).

The work of these agencies is described sufficiently elsewhere.[49] We are interested in the effects they had on rural communities, and we can pinpoint four: they increased resources for change in small villages; they enhanced the political leadership possibilities and administrative experiences of rural Native youth; they stimulated the involvement of communities in their future; and they brought to rural communities highly committed Caucasian youth, who identified in many cases with the self-determination goals and objectives of rural communities.

The resources put into programs that benefited people were not vast, given the relative abundance of state government resources in 1983. But in comparison to funds provided in federal and state programs at that time, the new resources produced the needed margin for change. By speaking of resources, we mean dollars not available previously--such as for day-care assistance and pre-school programs. We also mean the provision of seed-money for capital construction, as provided through CDC grants. Although an analysis of the total contribution of War on Poverty funds has not been done, it is safe to say that most of the resources were in the form of personnel salaries--to Headstart aides, VISTA volunteers, grassroots workers, and to CAP coordinators.

As was the case in other parts of the United States, the War on Poverty programs of the 1960s rapidly socialized minorities (in this case young Natives) to a politicized community development ethic, and made them available for broader leadership responsibilities in their communities. Native youths were granted responsible positions, given opportunities to travel in their own regions and statewide, and provided with training sessions. These experiences enhanced their ability to function on a par with Caucasians in state and federal government.

Community action programs greatly increased the involvement of village residents in public discussions about local, regional, and statewide issues. Moreover, they created opportunities for the transfer of knowledge and action from one rural region to another, as representatives and delegates appeared together at statewide forums. One of the mandates of the War on Poverty's community action program was that there be public hearings for projects, and "maximum feasible participation" in the development of plans to eradicate poverty in local areas. While this mandate was often ignored, there was real change in the process: attempts were made to involve individuals who had not been active previously, and to point out to them the benefits of participation.

A final but by no means the least important factor was the effect the community action programs had in creating a class of Caucasian intercessors in rural Alaska. This class was based on VISTA volunteers and later Alaska Legal Services workers, whose mission was to assist in the transformation of rural societies. As educated agents of change, they responded to the disadvantaged conditions they found. In some cases their responses were hasty and inappropriate, but a large number of these intercessors identified strongly with the rural people they had come to serve, and by lending communities their skills and expertise, they were able to assist in their organization for action. We will return to the role of Caucasian intercessors when we discuss the localization of rural education in Chapter 6.

Development of the Native Land Claims Movement

Shortly before the arrival of community action agencies, programs and activities, state agencies had begun to increase pressure on lands customarily used by Natives. This pressure brought on the formation of Native regional and then statewide land claims associations, and the development of an aggressive strategy for resolution of these claims.

State land selections were the direct cause of the land claims movement. When Alaska became a state, the federal government granted it rights to select 104 million acres. To provide for its financial future, and acting under the statehood act, the new state Department of Natural Resources sought to quickly locate and select those lands most likely to contain petroleum and other minerals.

The North Slope was the major site of state selections in rural Alaska,[50] for this region already contained a federal petroleum reserve, and geologic formations in other parts of the region seemed to promise rich fossil energy deposits. Without notifying local Inupiat Eskimo residents, the state selected the lands at Prudhoe Bay that have produced the state's oil bonanza of recent years. Additional exploratory and surveying activity in this area was one of several stimuli that led Inupiat leaders to form the Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) in December 1965. ASNA was established chiefly to establish Inupiat claims to aboriginal use and occupancy of all of Alaska's North Slope.[51]

Possible loss of Native lands was the single most important stimulus to formation of regional Native associations throughout Alaska. Secondary causes were increased constraints on Native use of lands as seen, for example, in state and federal enforcement of regulations on subsistence use of species such as caribou and waterfowl.

Native leaders in areas most affected by state selections spread information about state plans, and Native regions under no particular pressure from state or federal agencies nevertheless followed suit in forming claims associations. Thus, by 1966, land claims associations had been formed to cover all areas of rural Alaska. The formation of these organizations created extremely strong forces for change in rural Alaska. Perhaps the most virile regional association was ASNA, and it had the most at stake. Shortly after its organization, ASNA filed suit to stop the state's plan to sell oil and gas leases on the North Slope. Following this action, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in 1966 put a moratorium on transfers of all federal lands to the state government until the Native claims were settled.

Late in 1966, leaders of the regional associations met formally to discuss statewide federation, which they accomplished with the establishment of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) in 1967. Notwithstanding the strength and independent tendencies of some of the regional land claims associations, AFN maintained a relatively unified posture of Alaska Natives when the claims of all Natives in the state were at the top of its agenda. AFN quickly proposed the resolution of land claims. However, oil companies refused to negotiate with Native groups, and AFN's plans were not supported by the state government, which opposed a large grant of land to Alaska Natives, and which was disinclined to make monetary payments to Natives when the state's own fiscal picture was bleak.

The discovery of oil and gas at Prudhoe Bay in 1968 was the most important catalyst to the passage of land claims legislation. The proven existence of huge quantities of this scarce resource, and the inability of the oil companies to continue exploration work (or acquire a federal permit to construct a pipeline to bring the oil to market) without resolution of Native claims, set the stage for Native leaders and their lawyers to develop a proposal for settling the claims. Oil companies wished to begin exploitation of Prudhoe Bay oil, and wanted no legal challenges to their ability to work. The state government, on whose lands the oil was located, stood to gain vast revenues in taxes and royalties from oil produced. The federal government could satisfy these and other competing demands, and the Republican administration could take credit for the nation's most generous settlements of Native claims. President Nixon signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act into law on December 17, 1971, ratifying a temporary compromise of strongly antithetical interests.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)

The claims act has been the single most important stimulus to change of the social and political structure of rural Alaska (including school systems), and thus it is necessary to consider the provisions of the act and the ways in which it has directed change in rural communities.

Provisions of ANCSA

Basically, the Alaska Native Claims were settled through payments of cash and grants of land, and federal endorsement of state-chartered corporations, both at the regional and village levels.

The cash settlement was significant at the time the legislation was passed in December 1971, and still is in the 1980s. Some $962.5 million was to be provided to corporations and individual Natives in Alaska, but not through direct grants to individuals. Instead, roughly, one-half of the amount was to be channeled to Native regional corporations formed under the act, for their use in the creation of economic investments for their shareholders. The remaining funds were to be distributed to village corporations and the "at large" regional shareholders. The village corporations were also under some mandate to distribute funds to their shareholders. The payout schedule was to run for 10 years; the sources of funds were to be the federal treasury and a percentage of state royalties on oil.

The land settlement was significant at the time of the legislation and has become increasingly important since then. About 44 million acres of land, more than 10 percent of the total land area of Alaska, was to be distributed to Natives, but individual ownership was not the primary objective. Instead, the surface rights to some 22 million acres were to be distributed to village corporations, on the basis of the lands they selected (selections that took priority over state selections), with the subsurface rights given to the regional corporations. An additional 16 million acres (surface and subsurface rights) were to be distributed to twelve regional corporations based on a "land lost" formula in the act. Nearly two million acres were set aside for other purposes, and an additional four to five million acres may be patented to village corporations representing five former reserves.

The corporations, both village and regional, were thus the major direct beneficiaries of ANCSA. These were new legal entities in Alaska, but they expressed the most powerful force in the land claims movements.[52] The boundaries of the twelve new regional corporations resembled those of the regional land claims associations (See Map 3), and the new leadership of corporations was initially drawn from the ranks of the Native associations.

Although new regional corporations resembled old Native associations, the goals of the economic units were entirely different. The corporations were chiefly concerned with getting title to the land and making profits for their shareholders. They have had problems in attaining these objectives.

Conveyance of lands to the corporations was slowed by the lengthy process of identifying lands of maximum value to Native regions, and by the time-consuming technical requirements involved in transfer of federal property. The flow of cash to corporations was timely, but problems developed in the creation of profitmaking concerns. One major difficulty was that new boards of directors of the corporations lacked knowledge and experience. A second was the small size of some village corporations, which could not become viable economic units. This led to mergers of village corporations in some regions, and mergers of villages with regional corporations in others. A third problem was the extensive litigation required to insure that lands were conveyed and that other aspects of ANCSA were implemented. Finally, profit-making was made difficult by the lack of integration among a large number of corporations pursuing limited investment and development opportunities in rural regions of the state.

ANCSA as a Stimulus to Rural Sociopolitical Organizations

The 1970s began in rural Alaska with the prospect for self-directed and -initiated change. The major stimulus for this change was creation of the economic corporations at the village and regional levels. The first half of the decade saw the development of regional and local corporations. Notwithstanding the problems mentioned, some investments in new enterprises did turn a profit. New sources of capital became available in many rural regions, and the new corporations provided jobs for Natives. Corporations also increased opportunities for Natives to participate in decisions affecting their lives, through shareholders' meetings and corporate planning processes and elections. Of equal significance, village and regional corporation leaders--all of whom were Alaska Natives--became the most powerful political spokesmen in their villages and regions. They also became an important force in state politics through the AFN.

The 1960s land claims associations had conducted a variety of social programs supported by grants or contracts from government agencies or foundations. ANCSA contained no provision for the continuation of these social activities, and as profit-making entities the new corporations could not undertake social service activities. Therefore, in each of the twelve Native regions, the Native associations continued as non-profit corporations, conducting programs in such areas as health, education, housing, and employment assistance. The indirect impact of ANCSA then was to stimulate the development of organizations whose major role was the delivery of public services in rural regions.

Thus, the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, by setting up regional and village Native corporations with cash and wealth in land, was an important force in creating an organizational impetus for decentralized educational services.

Action to Decentralize Rural Education

The movement to decentralize control over rural schools involved leaders of Native corporations, statewide Native leaders, and educational researchers from the state university. In 1973, the state Department of Education authorized an investigation of alternatives for education in the unorganized borough, and the University of Alaska's Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) coordinated the project. CNER's year-long study was done in coordination with AFN's Human Resources Committee and the Alaska Legislative Committee on Prehigher Education. The process involved meetings of educators, legislators, public officials, and organization leaders--most of whom were Natives. There were also rural meetings and directed sessions with policy makers.[53]

The CNER report, Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough, laid the groundwork for legislative changes.[54] The report found that centralized control of educational services had not met needs of rural peoples, and that any continuation of centralized policymaking was unacceptable because of its inefficiency and deleterious effects on local leadership. Several alternatives to centralization were debated, including creation of educational service areas, regionalization, and development of community control through formation of local governments.

Bills were introduced in both houses of the state legislature, but no action was taken until Native organizations lobbied strongly for legislation in the 1975 session. That led to the decentralization of educational services.

As with most attempts at rural organizational change, the motives of organizers were varied. For Native leaders, the most important objective was to wrest control of schools in local communities from professional educators and state bureaucrats who represented the increasing dominance of western culture and institutions in rural society. The response to feelings of powerlessness and loss of control was this demand for localized decision making. For some leaders, an additional purpose was to improve resources available for Native education, by developing a more efficient decentralized structure around which local communities could mobilize and seek greater financial support. And to most leaders, an important objective was the improvement of Native schooling--the thought being that local control would lead to greater attention to the distinctive problems of Native education. The movement was supported by educational professionals who resented distant control and by the political ideology of self-determination at the national level. One of the leaders of the statewide decentralization movement put the objectives this way:

> There were two sellers to the REAA idea: 1) local school board control would improve delivery of education, and 2) REAAs would deal with what a student was--why do the same for all?

Irrespective of the motives and objectives of the leaders of the Alaska Native education movement in the 1970s, the action married desires for improvement of schooling for Natives to demands for Native political control over rural regions of the state. These interests were reflected in the process of implementation.

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CHAPTER 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION IN RURAL ALASKA

The movement for decentralization of rural education did not end with the passage of state and federal legislation. As is the case with most organizational changes, the way in which statutes and laws were implemented influenced greatly the pattern of local school operations. This chapter describes the bases of authority to decentralize rural schooling and chronicles briefly the process of change. Then it examines the resource issues of implementation and the issues of power and influence that affected the extent to which control was localized.

Legal Authority to Decentralize

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was the forerunner to both the decentralization of state educational services in the 1975 creation of Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs)and the decentralization of federal Indian programs to the local level, in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (and related legislation, P.L. 95-561). Both these legislative changes went a step beyond delegation of power. They partially devolved federal and state power, by either creating or empowering local councils and assemblies to make educational decisions affecting rural Alaskans and Alaska Natives. Also, they partially deconcentrated federal and state power, by moving the apparatus for educational program delivery one stage closer to the people served.

After a year's wait, the state's REAA enabling legislation passed quickly through the legislature in 1975. Legislators considered several bills reflecting the issue positions developed by the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER), of the University of Alaska, and the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), whose Human Resources Committee had worked on this issue with CNER. Similar bills were introduced in both houses of the legislature (Senate Bill 35, or S.B. 35, after which the REAA act is usually named, and House Bill 24), and a conference version of the bills was enacted in June 1975.[1] The legislation established a transitional Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD), which was to be replaced within a year by 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs), each with elected school boards empowered to control all but ultimate fiscal decisions.

Change in control of federal schools for Natives occurred somewhat less quickly. Notwithstanding the state and federal intent to transfer control of BIA schools to the state, both governments moved slowly to integrate them into the statewide system. By 1975, 43 of the BIA schools operated by the federal government still had not changed hands. Then, developments in federal Indian policy again influenced the pattern of educational organization in Alaska. First, congressional passage of P. L. 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, permitted the contracting of social services to tribal organizations, thus involving village traditional and IRA councils and nonprofit Native associations in school-related matters. (IRA councils are federally chartered village councils, formed under terms of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, as extended to Alaska in 1936.)

Specifically, this legislation provided for self-determination of Indian tribes, in the sense that they rather than federal agencies would administer the federally funded programs (within categories, such as welfare, employment assistance, and adult education). As applied to Alaska, the legislation made IRA and traditional councils the first Native governments to be considered for social service funding. Passage of the act gave Alaska Native communities a more secure funding mechanism than they had previously had. (The revival of Alaska IRA and traditional councils is partly a consequence of this new financial arrangement.) IRA councils had the option of applying for and administering program funds themselves, transferring their financial authority to regional nonprofit associations, or retaining the BIA as a service provider.

Then, in 1978, Congress passed P.L. 95-561, which provided for decentralization of Indian schools and the making of budgetary, curriculum, and personnel decisions by boards at the local school level. However, the amount of funds allotted to each school was determined by a formula not unlike that used in many states which distributed support on an average daily membership basis. Few communities actually took advantage of this policy change.

Finally, in a policy change under the Reagan administration, federal support of BIA schools was to be terminated over a two-year period. This action was intended to phase out remaining BIA schools in Alaska, and their transfer (in some cases forced) to REAA districts (beginning in 1982). The federal action was implemented in a manner largely inconsistent with the intent of the self-determination act.

The Process of Decentralization

Creation of the REAA System in Rural Alaska

The first action taken under S.B. 35 was setting boundaries for the new REAAs. This activity was assigned to the state Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA), which was to work in consultation with the state Department of Education (DOE). In a series of hearings and informational meetings in rural areas of the state (of the unorganized borough) in July and August, 1975, agency officials solicited views on the areas to be covered in the REAA districts.

S.B. 35 provided that REAA boundaries would follow regional corporation boundaries established under ANCSA, implying that there would be at least 12 school districts. But the legislation prescribed that REAAs would have certain characteristics. They were to contain an integrated and homogenous socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural area. Designers also were to consider ease of transportation and communication within each newly created district. These standards for incorporation resembled those called for in the incorporation of boroughs.[2] DCRA and DOE approached the drawing of boundary lines with these ideas in mind. With drafts in hand, agency officials held hearings in a large number of rural locations regarding the proposed boundaries.[3] At the conclusion of the hearing process, the rural areas of the state were divided into 21 REAA areas.

The new rural districts were a compromise of the various objectives of designers. In each of the largest Native regions--Calista and Doyon--it was necessary to establish several districts. The designers paid attention to geographic and cultural factors. Thus, in the Calista region, districts were set up for each of the two major rivers--Kuskokwim and Yukon. In the Doyon region, districts were established on the two road arteries to the south--the Richardson and Parks highways, and villages that can generally be reached only by plane were divided between eastern and western regions. But one district (Iditarod) included both Calista and Doyon villages. Given the large area of regional corporations, single districts were set up for only four regions--Northwest Arctic, Bering Straits, Copper River, and Chugach (see Map 3 of REAA boundaries). Some REAAs contained city school districts within their boundaries.

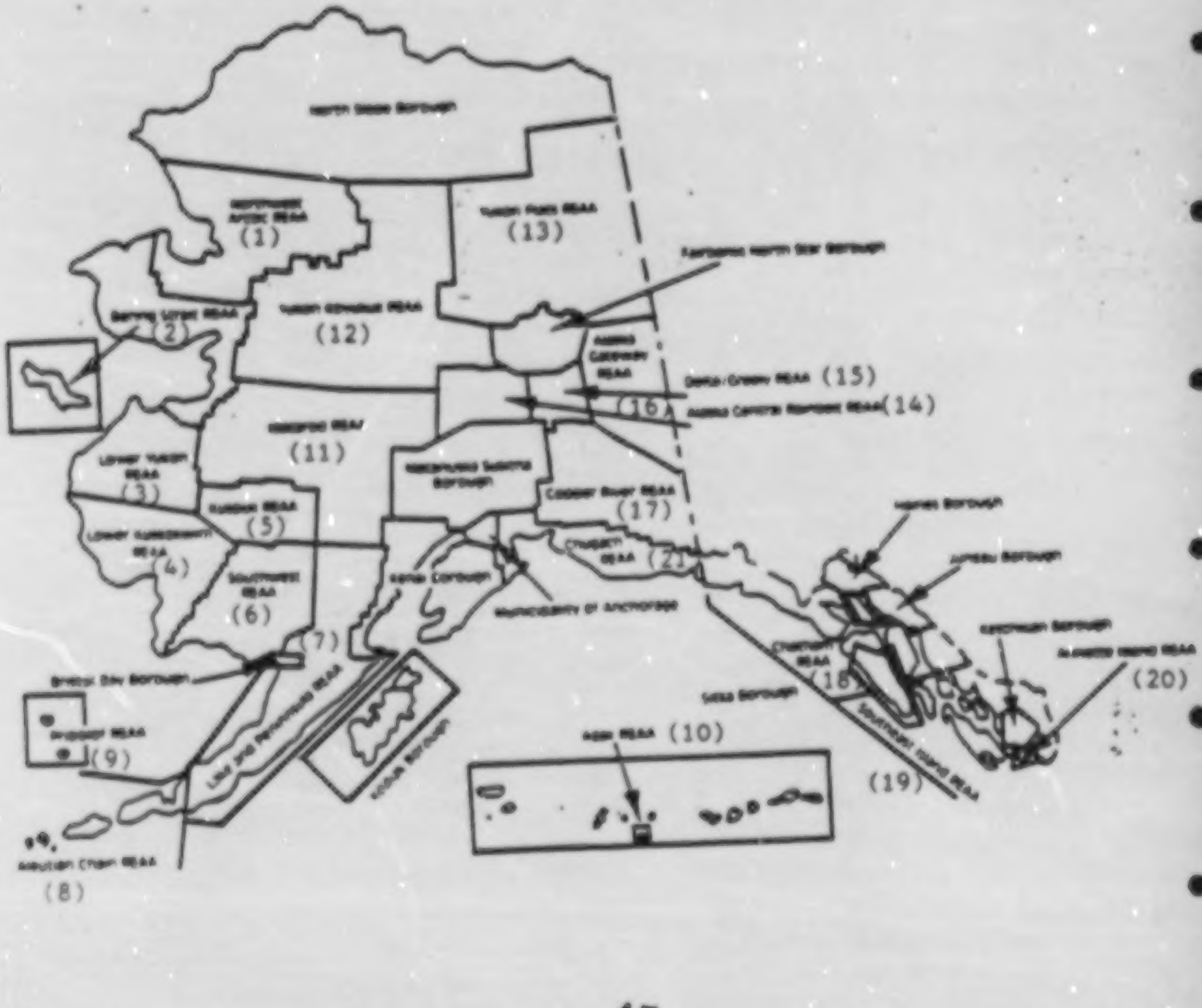
Within each REAA, voters were to elect a board of from five to 11 members. The number was determined initially by DOE, in consultation with committees through hearings held in the district areas. The legislation provided that small communities could be represented on boards through the procedure of dividing REAA districts into school board sections, each with one or more seats on the board. Section lines were to be drawn based on population distribution, but some gerrymandering permitted the representation of very small communities on the board. Board members were elected at large by all voters of an REAA.[4] This process had to be completed quickly, because elections were scheduled for January and February 1976. In those elections, 147 board seats were contested.

Powers of the regional schools board were delegated. REAA districts had only powers granted by the legislature, which limited their resources as mentioned below. An important aspect of the decentralization process, however, was that Marshall Lind, the Commissioner of Education, who had overriding authority with respect to REAA school operations, gave virtual autonomy to the new districts. His personal values were strongly supportive of the decentralization movement. Reflecting on the role he had played, he commented:

> I guess I am patient by nature. I have an orientation that helps a good deal--basic respect and trust for people, in whatever capacity. I have felt that board members are concerned, sincere individuals who want to do what's right. They mostly hire people with these feelings. At times we screw up, but as a state agency, we ought to help them...by God we should do it. It is very easy to take regulations and come down hard on rural

MAP 3—REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE AREAS

1. Northwest Arctic
2. Bering Straits
3. Lower Yukon
4. Lower Kuskokwim
5. Kuspuk
6. Southwest
7. Lake & Peninsula
8. Aleutian Chain
9. Pribilof
10. Adak
11. Iditarod
12. Yukon Koyukuk
13. Yukon Flats
14. Alaska Central Railbelt
15. Delta/Greely
16. Alaska Gateway
17. Cooper River
18. Chatham
19. Southeast Island
20. Annette Island
21. Chugach


North Slope Borough
Northwest Arctic REAA
(1)
Yukon Flats REAA
(13)
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Bering Straits REAA
(2)
Yukon Koyukuk REAA
(12)
Alaska Gateway REAA
Delta/Greely REAA (15)
(16)
Alaska Central Railbelt REAA (14)
Iditarod REAA
(11)
Lower Yukon REAA
(3)
Matanuska Susitna Borough
Kuspuk REAA
(5)
Copper River REAA
(17)
Lower Kuskokwim REAA
(4)
Chugach REAA
(21)
Kenai Borough
Municipality of Anchorage
Southwest REAA
(6)
(7)
Haines Borough
Juneau Borough
Bristol Bay Borough
Ketchikan Borough
Annette Island REAA
(20)
Chatham REAA
(18)
Sitka Borough
Pribilof REAA
(9)
Lake and Peninsula REAA
Kodiak Borough
Adak REAA (10)
Southeast Island REAA
(19)
Aleutian Chain REAA
(8)

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> schools. That's the easy, bureaucratic approach. We are fortunate to have staff, board members who feel that we are here to help and not clamp down.[5]

Thus, areas of influence such as to "adopt regulations governing organization, policies and procedures for the operation of the schools," and to "develop a philosophy of education, principles and goals for its schools,"[6] were implemented by the REAA districts without significant interference from Juneau.

Interest in decentralizing control to the school building level resulted in the legal requirement that each community (or military reservation) with a school have a community school committee (CSC). Members were to be elected at regular municipal elections or special elections, and the CSCs were given, under S.B. 35, rather loosely defined responsibilities: "to review and make recommendations to the board" of the REAA "concerning the curriculum, program and general operation of the local school."[7] They also could be delegated other functional responsibilities by the school board and, as we shall see, in several districts their involvement with school processes was extensive.

However, in some REAA districts, such as those with only two or three schools--for example, Delta-Greely and Adak--the community school committees were superfluous from the start. In larger REAA districts--such as Iditarod, Lower Kuskokwim, and Northwest Arctic--the committees appeared to perform valuable services, for not every village in the larger regions was represented on the regional boards. As the new system developed, however, misunderstandings and conflicts arose between the regional boards and the community committees: regional interests contesting with village interests. A major area of controversy concerned the control of hiring at the school site. One outcome of this conflict was a change in regulations affecting the CSCs. An amendment to REAA legislation in 1979 (supported by most district offices and boards) removed all references to the CSC, and the regional school boards had the option of eliminating them. Today, one-fourth of the schools in rural Alaska have no community school committees. (But they retain the option to have them, as do city and borough districts.) Most of the remaining local boards are called Advisory School Boards (ASBs), to reflect their lack of legal authority. As we shall see, only a minority of the existing local boards have strong influence over local school staff and programs.

Termination of BIA Schools

BIA schools figured in this process, in that they either could be absorbed into an REAA district or could become "independent" under the contracting procedures of P.L. 95-561, resembling city school districts but without a local tax contribution. This remains an option and BIA schools have gone independent in Chevak, Akiak, Akiachak, and Tuluksak.

Some controversy surrounded the decentralization of BIA schools too. The federal requirement for transfer of authority was that the local community be consulted and agree formally to the movement of its school into the state's jurisdiction or to the creation of an independent school. In several communities in the early 1980s, there were questions about the adequacy of presentation of options to villagers, and more than one community that initially sought transfer to the state (and its REAA districts) changed its mind and sought to rescind the action.

As the federal withdrawal from Native education in Alaska began in earnest in 1982, however, independence of BIA schools became possible only through the organization of a first class municipality. Hints of court suits were heard, but to date no BIA school community has tried this route to retain federal support.

Regional and Local Models of Decentralization

There were two models for the decentralization of education, and both were implicit in the enabling legislation. One model and reference point was the borough school district. State constitutional provisions on local government had specified that boroughs (both urban and rural) were to include all schools within borough boundaries, and administer them through a borough school district that was responsible to the borough assembly. To encourage urban areas to assume local responsibility for education, the legislature gave newly formed boroughs large land grants and strong taxing powers to support education. Urban areas that resisted local government organization were forced to develop school districts incorporated within the borough under terms of the Mandatory Borough Act of 1963. The two rural districts with rich tax bases formed boroughs voluntarily. The first borough formed was the Bristol Bay Borough, a small settlement including one of the world's richest salmon fisheries. The second case occurred in 1972 when Natives of the North Slope formed America's largest local government in the territory which includes the Prudhoe Bay oil reserves (taxed by the borough). The North Slope Borough's independent school district gained local control over schools formerly administered by the SOS and BIA. The idea of S.B. 35 framers was that once REAA districts developed a tax base, they should become boroughs, and their school districts should rely on local support.

The second model was the city school district. Areas outside organized boroughs but within first class city boundaries were obligated to provide for education. In 1976, there were 24 such city districts, and about half were in rural areas as we have defined them. The REAA legislation had provided that each community within REAA districts have substantial input through its Community School Committee. This gave substantial autonomy to local communities and, because one analogue for the CSC was the city school district board, it gave an impetus to the incorporation of first class cities within REAAs and formation of city school districts. (The two communities in rural Alaska that have already followed this route were Sand Point in 1978 and Tanana in 1982.)

Thus as the REAA system was established, tensions developed between regional headquarters and villages. What this brief review suggests is that choices for rural communities were constructed along regional and local lines, with the weight of resources on the side of the regional option.

Resources Issues in Implementation

The issues of resources in the implementation of decentralized education were primarily those of money, new school construction, and personnel.

Funding the REAAs

The REAAs are funded under provision of the Alaska Public School Foundation Program, using the same formula for determining public support as city and borough school districts, except that no local contributions are required. In addition, REAA districts are given an amount per student equal to the average per pupil local tax contributions in city and borough districts, and some REAAs may receive an area cost-of-living supplement. Residents of REAA districts are not required to make any tax contributions to support their schools. (On the average, well over 80 percent of city and borough school district budgets are funded by the state, and local taxpayers make relatively slight contributions to education compared to taxpayers in other states.) Although REAA districts may receive voluntary contributions from local individuals or corporations, this has been an infinitesimal source of income in all cases. The chief funding difference then between REAAs and city/borough districts is that REAAs are not permitted to tax. A minor difference is that REAAs receive less than the full value of federal payments remitted to the state in lieu of taxes on federal installations.[8]

REAAs are similar to city and borough districts with respect to their ability to receive federal and state funds for special programs. They may receive Johnson O'Malley (JOM) funds directly as well as assistance under the Indian Education Act. Funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs are available, such as Title I monies, but these are administered through the state DOE for all districts. All districts are eligible for community school programs.

Because legislators feared that REAAs and other districts were allocating more funds to administrative and operating expenses than instructional ones, the legislature required that at least 55 percent of district budgets be spent on instruction. Furthermore, as one control on the budgeting practices of districts, they were restricted from carrying forward into the next fiscal year more than 10 percent of their budget. (However, there is no penalty if they do.)

Thus, the funding issues in the implementation of decentralization concerned slight disparities in revenues between REAAs and city/borough districts and a significant discrepancy in revenue sources. This led some REAAs to perceive that they were subjects of discrimination in the state legislature, because they received somewhat fewer of the pass-through federal dollars and because they had no ability to raise revenue locally. Borough districts including all urban schools in the state took the opposite view. They saw the new rural districts getting a free ride from the state, and their residents objected to paying property taxes for operating expenses and for building construction when residents of the unorganized borough paid none.

New Schools in Rural Alaska

The amount of funding available for instructional programs was not an issue in most REAA districts. There was enough money. Some CSCs complained that districts did not give them discretionary revenue, and this was an impediment to local control at the school site. But the most important funding issue concerned the construction of new schools and the maintenance of old schools now administered by regional boards. This was the Molly Hootch case, and the issue of state/local relations in the construction and administration of public facilities.

In 1972, Alaska Legal Services (ALS) filed a suit against the SOS on behalf of Molly Hootch, a girl (from Emmonak) whose village had no high school. The intent of the suit was to force the state to provide Hootch and other Native children high schools in their home communities. The State Supreme Court ruled that establishing local high schools was not required by the part of the state constitution that calls on the state to provide schools "open to all children." However, the court did comment that the state was morally obligated to provide high school opportunities for rural youth.[9]

Shortly thereafter, a second claim against the state was filed, Anna Tobeluk et al. versus Marshall Lind (Commissioner of Education) et al., alleging that failure to provide high schools in Native villages amounted to racial discrimination. This case was settled out of court in 1976. The agreement pledged the state DOE to actively seek funds from the legislature to provide secondary school opportunities in a large number of villages on a time schedule. The state Board of Education then adopted regulations assuring every child a right to attend high school in her or his community if there was an elementary school there, unless the community declined to have a school. The 1976 state legislature authorized and voters approved a $60 million bond issue for rural schools, the largest state bond issue up to that time for construction of public facilities. This fund was supplemented by succeeding legislatures, and it has led to the state's funding of construction of new schools in nearly 100 villages and the development of new high school programs there.[10]

The construction of these schools was controversial and the subject of press criticism, as "snafus and foulups" delayed construction and increased costs well beyond those projected.[11] Part of the difficulty lay in the limited authority of REAA boards and district staffs concerning school construction. Operation of the school physical plant and decisions to establish new schools or close old ones were all subject to approval by the Commissioner of Education.

Until 1981, REAAs' authority with respect to construction was limited: they either had to rely on the state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to build schools requested by REAAs, using funds appropriated by the legislature or accept and use grants from that department. Choice of sites and other important matters (such as whether the school should be constructed on pilings or on the ground, have a full court gym or a multipurpose room) rested with the discretion of departmental officials operating under state regulations. Ownerships of all school buildings and land remained with the state (the REAAs had use permits for them), unlike borough and city school facilities that were owned outright by the municipality. Thus, the issues of school construction and maintenance pushed the REAAs and the state departments into what were at times adversarial relations.

Personnel in REAA Districts

REAA staffing authority and patterns also tended to resemble those of other districts in the state. The REAA district boards had full authorization to hire and fire administrators (including superintendents), teachers, and support staff. Thus, unlike the New York decentralization case where constraints were placed upon the hiring of teachers and administrators by decentralized districts, in Alaska there were no such limits.

Initially, REAAs were simply miniature versions of the SOS, centralized in regional capitals of rural Alaska. Many staff were former employees of SOS or AUBSD and continued in similar posts in the REAAs--leading to the observation "system changed, people were the same." Then, as Hootch schools were built and new school programs developed, the number of teachers and administrators increased. Most of those recruited to fill administrative and teaching positions were Caucasians from urban areas without Alaska experience. Many brought to rural Native regions an entirely different set of values and expectations; therefore, they formed a major agency of change in rural communities.

Power Issues in Implementation

Legislation decentralizing rural Alaska education created new institutions--district offices, regional superintendents, regional school boards, and local educational committees. Actors in these new school institutions and roles came into competition for control over school operations with local actors--site administrators (principals, principal/teachers) and teachers. The legislation also increased the number of monitors of rural school affairs. And the complexity of policymaking in the new system attracted the participation of new educational interest groups, which competed for influence with professional associations and older interests.

The Actors

This section describes the five major institutions (or roles) in the implementation of decentralization in rural Alaska education. We also present some information on the characteristics of actors. These data are drawn from statewide surveys of rural principals, teachers, superintendents, and school board members, during the period 1981-1983. Survey methodology is discussed in the appendix.

Superintendents and District Staff. The most visible new actors in rural Alaska education are superintendents and their district office staffs. New school headquarters were established for each of the 21 REAAs, and in a short period of time, they became a major source of employment and funding for regional capitals of rural areas. For example, school districts located in McGrath, Mountain Village, Ft. Yukon, and Tok are now major sources of year-round employment in these communities, and school construction provides significant new employment for residents of these places.

The size of the district administration varies by student population, size of district, logistic problems within it, and preference of the district superintendent. In some REAA districts in 1982, the district office consisted of little more than a superintendent, secretary, and maintenance person, but in most there was a large work force. The average size of the REAA bureaucracy is 34 persons. In a few districts with widely scattered schools, such as Northwest Arctic School District and Lower Kuskokwim School District, the central office held nearly 100 employees--a large number of personnel given the fact that none of the Alaska rural districts had more than 1,200 students. The superintendent occupies a prominent position within the district office; and in most districts, he is a person of regional political influence. But turnover at the superintendency is high, and over the seven year period 1976-1983, the rate of turnover exceeded 80 percent. Only three superintendents of districts with rural schools occupied the same post in 1983 that they had held in 1976. This relatively high rate of turnover is one factor limiting the political influence of superintendents.

The staff of REAA districts is likely to include one or more assistant superintendents, a business officer and staff, a maintenance officer and staff, a facilities coordinator, a director of titled (mainly federal) programs, and a curriculum coordinator and staff. In some of the regional districts, there is sufficient autonomy in staff positions for officers to exert influence independent of the superintendent over areas of school operations. This is not a universal phenomenon of rural district staffs, however.

In most characteristics, rural superintendents in Alaska resemble those in the contiguous 48 states. In 1982 all but two were male, and two were minorities. Their average age, 48, was lower than that of superintendents outside of Alaska, and for this reason primarily they had less experience in school administration. A relatively small percentage (30 percent) had more than seven years experience in rural school teaching or administration in Alaska. It is a requirement of the state that superintendents hold administrative credentials. Few of the superintendents in rural Alaska have education beyond the masters' level.

District School Boards. REAA district school boards were established in 1976, and they too are new institutions. Boards vary in size from 5 to 11 members, with districts paying different amounts of attention to the representation of unique interests of the region, including geographic areas or villages, on the board. In 1976, there were 147 seats in the first REAA board elections. If we add to this number the membership of city school boards and boards of boroughs in which there are rural schools, we reach a total of approximately 250 rural district school board members in Alaska.

Rural board members are occasional participants in school affairs in most districts; no district holds weekly meetings or work sessions on a regular basis. Board members in most districts are given a per diem to attend meetings, and this is an incentive to membership for some whose opportunities for seasonal or year-around employment are limited.

In 1983, the majority of regional board members were male (61 percent), and most had lived in rural Alaska a good part of their lives. Unlike superintendents, a clear majority of rural board members were Alaska Natives, representing a constituency that is primarily Native in ethnicity. Board members on the average are not well educated. A majority had not graduated from high school, and a sizable minority has not attended high school. Less than 10 percent of rural school board members had graduated from college. Limited education and Native ethnicity are the chief areas in which board members are different from teachers and school administrators.

Principals and Principal/Teachers. There is far greater variation in the environment of rural education than is the case in Alaska's city schools, and this variation is reflected in the administrative position of principal. Nearly 45 percent of rural schools are directed by heads or principal-teachers. They work in very small schools with fewer than 50 students, where they are the only teacher or share teaching responsibilities with no more than five other teachers. This position is much different from the principalship in the larger rural schools such as those in Bethel, Kotzebue, Barrow, Dillingham, and Nome. Here, principals tend to have no classroom responsibilities. But the schools are still small by urban American standards, and the position of principal in them more resembles that of team leader than it does the executive director of a complex institution. The principalship in the larger schools tends to resemble that in other rural regions of the United States.

In 1981, Alaska rural school principals were likely to be middle-aged, Caucasian males who had taught school at least five years and served as principals for approximately three years.[12] The average age of principals was 41 years, with the youngest principal 26 and the oldest 63. Some 82 percent of rural principals were male. Only 4 percent (13) of the principals were non-Caucasian, and in this respect principals were unlike rural Alaskans, the majority of whom are Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut.

Most principals had some experience in rural Alaska. The average years' residence was 4.5, with a range from less than one year (2 percent) to more than 16 years (11 percent). Many new and old principals had lived in other rural cultures and gained experience through the Peace Corps, study abroad, or teaching in rural areas of the U.S. or foreign countries. Thus, rural principals were not new actors on the rural scene.

Most principals had taught school for an average of five years, and from this basis were selected to be principals or principal-teachers of local schools. While the average length of service for principals was 2 years, this statistic camouflaged a wide range of variation. Some 36 percent of the principals had not been chief school administrators the previous year. No more than 16 percent of the principals had held positions over a five-year period in the same school. These facts underline the high rate of turnover in the rural principalship.

Teachers. In personal characteristics, Alaska's rural teachers resemble teachers elsewhere in the U.S. They are much different from most rural Alaska residents. Teachers sampled in 1982 were from 23 to 63 years of age, and the average teacher was 33 years old.[13] An overwhelming majority--91 percent--were Caucasians; 3 percent were Alaska Natives, like the majority of the rural population. Slightly more women (55 percent) than men teach in rural schools.

Few rural educators had taught more than 20 years. Most were still relatively new to teaching, and the average number of years' experience was seven. A small minority had spent much time at the school where they currently taught: 55 percent had taught there fewer than two years, and only 15 percent had taught at the same school for more than seven years.

Few respondents reported they had held jobs in education other than classroom teaching. Of these, the largest number worked as teachers' aides, or in administration, coordination and counseling. Most had some experience in fields other than education, in managerial and clerical or sales capacities.

Rural Alaska teachers are newcomers to Alaska and to rural regions in comparison to most residents. They had lived there an average of three years. Four percent (13) were born in the state, and only 5 percent (16) took their baccalaureate degrees in Alaska. The largest number graduated from Pacific coast, inter-mountain, and northern states--Oregon, Washington, California, Colorado, Maine, and Minnesota. In extent of education and in degree field, rural Alaska teachers were not greatly different from other U.S. teachers.

Local School Boards and Committees. The Community School Committees (CSCs) of the 1975 REAA legislation were new boards in a formal, legal sense. Under the SOS and old BIA systems, local boards were advisory; the new units possessed considerably more authority (until the legislation changed in 1979). In extreme cases, they could screen professional personnel employed to work in the school, set the school calendar, and control relatively large amounts of discretionary school funding. Most boards today have less influence. In addition to local boards (usually called Advisory School Boards or ASBs), federal and state special programs require the creation of Parent Advisory Committees (PACs), for example for Title I, Johnson O'Malley, Indian Education, and special education purposes. These boards and committees are connected to local and regional boards in a number of different ways across the state.

In many respects, local board members sampled in 1983 had personal background characteristics like those of district board members. They differed in that local board and committee members were more likely to be women (54 percent) than men; they tended to be younger; and they were even less likely to have year-round employment than regional board members. Perhaps the most significant difference was that local board members represented the ethnic composition of their communities better than regional board members.

Monitors of Local School Operations

Government at the local, state, and federal level may by law regulate the operation of local Alaska school affairs. Power over local schools is more potential than actual, however.

Local Governments. In city and borough school districts with rural schools, the school district is fiscally dependent (for local revenues) on the city council or borough assembly. In theory, educational expenditures are controlled by the council or assembly, which in making a local contribution to education may independently audit expenditures and even educational programs. In fact, for most rural schools within organized municipalities, the council's action is an automatic acceptance of the budget forwarded to it by the school board.

Because the REAAs are located in Alaska's unorganized borough, which lacks an assembly or council, the state legislature has exercised this power indirectly. It has done so through the creation of an oversight committee, a joint committee made up primarily of rural members of the state house and senate. The REAA oversight committee has conducted a number of investigations--related to dropouts, teacher housing, transportation costs, and similar issues[14]--and these have influenced to an extent legislative funding. Its influence over REAA operations, however, has been sporadic. On occasion it requires that district office business personnel present information on instructional and transportation costs to the committee. Superintendents may be asked to report to the oversight committee too (in person), and this may have some effect on their actions.

A third local government, the traditional council of the village, has been involved in the operation of a few schools in rural Alaska. Under terms of P.L. 95-561, traditional or IRA councils may contract for the operation of BIA schools, and in the villages of Chevak, Akiak, Akiachak, and Tuluksak this was done. In these instances, the traditional council functioned more as a school board than as a council or assembly, however, in that it made no local financial contribution to schools.

State Government. Three state-level institutions in addition to the legislature are important sources of influence on local rural school operations. The state Board of Education is responsible by law for the establishment of policies which govern operation of the Department of Education and school districts. The Alaska Board of Education is appointed by the state governor; since the formation of the REAA system in 1975-76, rural areas of the state have been represented on the board, and it has been very sympathetic to rural school concerns. Board policy obviously has an impact on school operations, but in the past it has not discriminated between rural and urban schools. Thus, major policy areas such as length of school year (the 180 day requirement), unit requirements for graduation, credentials required for teachers and administrators, and the like affect all schools.

The Commissioner of Education is selected by the state board. The commissioner holds cabinet rank, and is the chief administrative officer of the state Department of Education. From 1974 to 1983, covering the first seven years of operation of REAA schools and decentralization within the BIA, the state had only one Commissioner of Education, Marshall Lind. Commissioner Lind had taught in rural schools and headed a school district with a large number of rural schools, and he was conversant with financial and policy issues concerning them. He was strongly supportive of the decentralization of rural schools, and he intervened in rural school operations only when questions about the use of public funds came to light.[15]

The state Department of Education is an integrated education agency that does not distinguish rural from urban schools. The department's role under Commissioner Lind was as a facilitator of school district and local school operations. The monitoring activity of the agency largely concerned financial operations and counts of student attendance. Little program or personnel evaluation was done in any of the rural schools.

Federal Government. Two federal agencies have been involved in local school operations in rural Alaska--the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) of the Interior Department and the federal Department of Education. Before the BIA system was decentralized administratively, educational policy was set in Washington, D.C., for implementation by the BIA area office in Juneau. This office delegated particular responsibilities to four agency offices in Bethel, Fairbanks, Nome, and Southeast (also in Juneau), which were to administer each school following these policies. The BIA employed staff, ordered supplies and equipment, determined the school schedule and curriculum. Funds for the operation of schools were included with the BIA's overall budget.

The BIA schools remaining in the state are still wholy funded by the federal government. However, school staffing, curriculum, scheduling, and maintenance are now far more subject to the influence of local boards (and in a significant number of cases, to the agency offices) than was the case in the early 1970s.

The federal department of education has been involved in the funding of special programs in Alaska's rural schools, but the implementation of this has been done largely through the state Department of Education and through titled coordinators in school district headquarters. The only direct monitoring of rural school operations by the federal government has come through the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which acts on complaints related to discrimination.

Educational Interest Groups in Rural Alaska

Contributing to the complexity of school operations in rural areas are a large number of interest groups. The actors discussed above are represented statewide and, in the case of teachers, regionally, through relatively strong pressure groups. These include the Alaska Association of School Administrators (AASA), whose members are administrators in the district office (usually superintendents and assistant superintendents) and principals. AASA maintains connections with the state board of education and commissioner, on the one hand, and with the legislature, on the other. The chief interest of the association has been in insuring that the legislature funds schools as close to 100 percent of the foundation formula as possible; and it has been active in pressing for supplemental legislative funding. It also seeks to limit state regulation of school district and local school operations, such as through financial or program monitoring, and in this respect it has been largely successful. There are separate associations for elementary and secondary school administrators, neither of which has been greatly active in rural educational affairs.

The Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB) represents most of the regional school boards in the state, and like the AASA has greater representation from rural than urban schools. The AASB also lobbies the legislature for increases in school funding. In fact, in recent years the AASB and AASA have pooled resources to support a full-time lobbyist during the state legislative season. The AASB plays an important role in the recruitment of chief school administrators. District boards frequently have asked the executive director to advertise vacancies and do preliminary screening of applicants. And the AASB has a training program for new school board members that has been influential in shaping attitudes.

Teachers in Alaska are represented by the National Education Association (NEA), which is one of the state's most powerful interest groups. Its legislative agenda, for which it has several full-time lobbyists, includes support of the foundation formula for school funding, support of compulsory arbitration, and resistance to legislative attempts to implement competency-based instruction and other accountability measures that are perceived to be directed toward teachers.

These associations of teachers and administrators represent the interests of educational professionals well. Organizations and groups representing the interests of rural residents, Alaska Natives, and local boards are more diverse but no less effective. At the state level, two Native associations have been involved in rural education affairs. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conducts education panels at its annual conference, and frequently considers resolutions on rural education issues. As the strongest Native organization in the state, AFN's position on any issue concerning rural schools carries weight. Directly involved in rural education is the Human Resources Department of the Alaska Native Foundation (ANF), which, as mentioned, was instrumental in the passage of the REAA legislation. Both ANF and AFN have recently focused attention on the transfer of BIA schools to Alaska rural districts and the alternatives to transfer, such as contracting out school operations to traditional or IRA councils. Another state-level group is Alaska Legal Services, which was primarily responsible for the *Tobeluk v. Lind* consent decree that called for the building of small rural high schools (and for local community review of curriculum in these schools). A third group is the Alaska Native Education Association, a small but persistent group of Native educators that frequently addresses rural education concerns.

In addition, nonprofit Native corporations and Native regional and village corporations have followed school affairs in their communities and regions, and have not been reluctant to intrude upon staffing, curriculum, and fiscal decisions. The most recent example is the role of the Northwest Alaska Native Association (NANA Corporation), and its Spirit Committee, in promoting an Inupiat language program for that region's schools. Other examples are the activities of both the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) regarding transfer of BIA schools and Native language/culture programs. In general, local and regional Native organizations, with their strong concerns about local schooling, have been less successful in expressing these concerns through statewide associations than have educational professionals--primarily because they do not speak with one voice. Nevertheless, during the period of our study, Native legislators who were strongly connected to regional ANCSA corporations and nonprofits and statewide Native associations held positions of considerable influence in the state legislature.

Finally, the University of Alaska through its schools of education and its educational research community has functioned as an interest group in rural school affairs. Commissioned reports and studies have been one avenue of influence, as seen in the report *Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough*[16] and the study report on the state's new small high school programs.[17] A second avenue of influence, much less direct, has been through university off-campus programs that are based in regional school districts, and that involve university faculty and staff with local education officials and organizations.

Given the history of conflict and confrontation in the decentralization of education in many American cities, the process of implementation of decentralization in rural Alaska seems peaceful and untroubled. This is not to suggest that there have been harmonious relationships only, for during the first two years there was uncertainty and instability in community schools and political arenas, to which we will refer in following chapters. But there have been few staged battles between teachers and administrators, on the one side, and parents and community boards, on the other. There has also been little conflict between pressures from state level agencies and organizations and local-level school associations.

We can attribute the relative peace of implementation to three interrelated factors: size of units, money, and state administration. First, the population of rural students, parents, and communities was small indeed, when compared to American urban schools. Fewer than 3,000 teachers and administrators worked in rural Alaska, and they were fragmented across many regions. There was insufficient crowding to support very strong opposition to any stage of implementation. For example, there was not a class of educational professionals in any one place who felt they were going to lose, as did New York teachers. That major school actors were few in number facilitated communication and compromise. Second, Alaska's rural schools were decentralized at the very time when state government experienced the largest revenue bulge in its history. Oil pipeline construction began in 1974 and in 1977, when the pipeline had been completed and oil began to flow, the state had a large revenue surplus. From 1977 to 1982, there was enough money available to fund any school request, and no group with an issue that could be resolved by money was turned away. The public School Foundation program was amended almost annually through changes in the formula to increase the amount of state aid. The state's revenue picture began to change in 1982, but the full impact of this change has not yet been felt in local school affairs. Third, from 1974 to 1982 the state's Commissioner of Education, Marshall Lind, and the governor, Jay S. Hammond, were convinced of the political imperative of educational decentralization, and they supported its implementation consistently. These environmental factors played as important a role as local and regional political processes in the establishment of systems of control over local schools.

NOTES

1. CNER developed a framework of issues reflecting the concerns, issues, and methods of participants and agencies . The final review was at a December 1973 forum. A Summer 1974 AFN meeting was most instrumental in shaping options. See David H. Getches, Law and Alaska Native Education, Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, University of Alaska, 1977, p. 8, and Kathryn A. Hecht and Ronald K. Inouye, New School Districts in Rural Alaska, Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, University of Alaska, 1978, pp. 31-34, for a discussion of the chronology of the passage of S.B. 35.

2. Patrick K. Poland, "S.B. 35 and Regional Government," in Hecht and Inouye, 1978, pp. 137-142.

3. Getches, 1977, p. 10.

4. Hecht and Inouye, 1978, p. 57.

5. Personal interview with Commissioner, November 30, 1982, Juneau. There was sufficient political support for the new REAAs that the commissioner would have been frustrated in administering controls, had he been so inclined.

6. Alaska Statutes § 14.01.101(5) and 14.08.111(2).

7. Alaska Statutes § 14.08.101(6).

8. E. Dean Coon, "Financing the REAAs," in Hecht and Inouye, 1978, pp. 125-136.

9. Don M. Dafoe, The Governance, Organization, and Financing of Education for Alaska Natives, Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, University of Alaska, 1978, p. 41.

10. For a review of small high school programs, see Ray Barnhardt, ed., Small High School Programs for Rural Alaska, Fairbanks: Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, 1979.

11. John Greely, "The $60 Million Training Exercise," in Alaska Advocate, March 3, 1977.

12. These data and observations are drawn from our report, Principals in Rural Alaska: A Descriptive Profile, (Gerald A. McBeath, Judith S. Kleinfeld, G. William McDiarmid, and E. Dean Coon), Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1983.

13. Rural Teachers and Community Schools in Alaska, (Gerald A. McBeath, Judith S. Kleinfeld, G. William McDiarmid, E. Dean Coon and Carl Shepro), Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1983.

14. An example is the REAA Budget Oversight Committee's Report to the Legislature on REAA School Districts, Juneau, February 1982, which reviewed areas of REAA district office budget management, curriculum and operation of small village high schools, and high teacher turnover in REAAs.

15. The Commissioner said "When there are abuses with money, we deal with them. Look at Adventure-Based Education. I was patient. I stayed firm, and was not swayed by the politics of this matter." Personal interview, November 30, 1982, Juneau.

16. Frank Darnell, Kathryn A. Hecht, and James M. Orvik, Pre-higher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations, Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1974.

17. Barnhardt, 1979.

CHAPTER 4. MEASUREMENT OF EDUCATIONAL CONTROL IN RURAL ALASKA

The outlines of analysis are now in view. In rural Alaska, a once centralized school system has been dismantled, and control over educational affairs, particularly those affecting most of the Native population of the state, has been decentralized to new centers.

It is not possible to test the results of educational decentralization empirically. The records of the centralized state system were destroyed after ASOSS was dismantled in 1975-76. Boxes of test scores, attendance and drop out reports, even the complaint files--all were destroyed, for there was no space or successor institution to preserve this part of rural Alaska's history. Many actors in the ASOSS--students, teachers, administrators--continued on in the new systems, but we found in field research that memories had grown hazy. Recall data are unreliable under the best of circumstances, and the politics and ideology of decentralization in Alaska made objective participant accounts difficult to obtain. For these reasons, then, we could not follow the experimental paradigm and conduct a before-after study of the effects of organizational changes in rural education.

In the national debate on decentralization of education, one major goal was transfer of power to communities and their control of education. This was also an ultimate goal of participants in Alaska, which focused our attention on the community school from the start. As the debate was translated in Alaska, however, it combined with the Native self-determination movement. For several reasons, this movement focused control at the regional level, to which power was decentralized by the legislature in 1975. This made sense, given the political complexion of forces brought to bear on the legislature and given administrative considerations (costs would be lower and problems such as hiring of staff and setting up curricula could be dealt with more effectively.) Because there were two distinct foci of decentralization, our study of the effects of decentralization then became an examination of the pattern of control that resulted from system-wide organizational changes--and the outcomes associated with each type of control system.

A scientifically valid study would consider those outcomes first--the dependent variable--and attempt to understand them through analysis of potentially causative processes and factors. Again, the real world of data about rural Alaska education intruded: the state Department of Education had no complete, current file of test scores for elementary and secondary schools, unlike the situation in Michigan and New York. Furthermore, other outcome data that are usually available--e.g., data on attendance, dropouts, matriculation at

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college--were suspect as to their reliability or showed relatively little variance across rural schools.

However, concrete experiences during implementation of decentralization suggested that the type of control system established over local schools varied throughout rural regions. The question then became how best to capture the variable of school control.

Distribution and Amount of Control

The survey of literature on organizational change mentioned research on power and politics in education. With the exception of studies by Wirt and recently by Bacharach[1], emphasizing changes in the amount of influence on schools, most research has concentrated on the relative distribution of control in school systems. This is the key issue--professional versus lay control of schools--and recent evidence from urban schools supports both perspectives.

Both dimensions of control--the amount and distribution--are important to an understanding of local school operations and outcomes. Variance in amount of control in organizations generally has been deemphasized or omitted in studies of organizational change. Tannenbaum's several studies, summarized in Control in Organizations, remedied this lacking through analyses of the total amount of control in organizations. Possibilities of control within organizations or systems range from complete autonomy to complete dependence. Changes in the amount of control may occur through two means. First, Tannenbaum notes that the organization may expand externally into its environment. Examples that apply to school systems include the development of a local economy through school hiring or construction policies, and influence over a local policy through participation by school actors in campaigns for offices and change of governmental organization. The process of "enactment" or incorporation of the environment stressed by Pfeffer's akin to what Tannenbaum discusses as expansion of control. Second, control may be expanded through internal changes, such as increased interaction and reciprocal influence processes among organizational members, and increased member participation and subordination to organizational goals and objectives.[2] Examples of this form of expansion include the development of defined interaction structures within a school system and increased activity of school actors related to educational objectives. The tightness of administrative coupling within school districts is a summary measure of increased internal control. With respect to expansion in the amount of control both internally and externally, there seemed to be considerable variation in rural Alaska educational systems. Although the amount of control has not been our main subject, we have paid attention to both enactment of the school environment and administrative coupling within the school district.

The previous chapter identified five school actors who influence the formation and direction of rural school policy. However, identifying a distributional pattern of control is a more complex process than analyzing the amount of control. For example, one possible range is from the most hierarchical (superintendent) to the most democratic (local advisory board) control. However, this straight-forward dichotomy is misleading, for democratic control is available at the regional as well as local level, and hierarchy of decisionmaking may be stronger at the local level, through a strong principalship that leaves teachers little autonomy, than at the school district level. Also, it is nearly a truism of school politics that the issue is "control over what." Some functional areas of school activity, such as facilities planning and hiring of the school custodian, are irrelevant concerns to many school actors. In short, the variance in distribution may involve a dichotomy of influence or a configuration, and it may entail plural sets of functions that are difficult to sum.

Our leading research question was who controls local school operations in rural Alaska, to what extent, and with what effect. Thus, it was necessary for us to operationalize both the amount and distribution of control, and then collect data on the dimensions of control that could be used to characterize the pattern. No such information existed on a statewide basis, even impressionistically, when our study began. There were state DOE records that would assist us, such as information on teacher and administrative turnover, demographic data, and the like. But what was needed was information on control situations in local schools statewide that could be gathered economically. Our working hypothesis was that building principals would be most knowledgeable concerning operations of their schools. These local administrators were the source of state DOE data. Their formal position was most significant in the schools, and the most connected potentially to both school functions and community/regional forces. Notwithstanding the perceptual biases of local school administrators, we suspected they would be inclined to report accurately on school operating conditions (a suspicion confirmed during the course of our research[3]).

Methods Used to Measure Control

In spring 1981, we administered a statewide survey to school principals on a series of items related to our research, and 96 percent of the principals responded. (See Appendix) Our questions to principals concerned participation in school governance of principals themselves, teachers, students, parents and other community adults, local advisory groups, the district superintendent, and the district school board. Instead of asking for comments on participation and influence in general terms, we described a range of school functions and asked principals to tell us who participated in each and who was most influential.

Preliminary Data Analysis

Results from the principal survey gave us information on the basis of which to construct a nominal variable of distributional control. We specified the concept control operationally into three dimensions: localization, regionalization, and professionalization. We also considered the variable social environment.

The Dimension of Localization. There is continuing theoretical and practical debate over localization of control in rural Alaska education. When the study began, we thought there would be a relationship between localization (the maximum possible extent of decentralization) and student outcomes--adaptation and achievement. We have not hypothesized a direct linkage, for over the relatively short period in which decentralization has occurred, we did not expect to find a relationship between localization and student achievement as measured in reading and math scores on standard tests.

Localization implies a school system governed by a quasi-autonomous school board, where there is: locally influenced hiring of certified and classified staff, local determination of calendar and schedule, and local planning of and relevance to the school curriculum. (Of course, the further definition of "local" is relational and specific to communities.) The preliminary data analysis we did on results of the principal survey showed that there was significant variation among rural schools in the degree of localization. Moreover, this variation appeared to be as great or greater within multi-school districts as it was across them. This gave us confidence that the decision to select the school building and community as our primary unit of analysis was not mistaken.

Dimension of Regionalization. There is an implied opposition between localization and centralization. We have not focused upon centralization at the state or federal level for two reasons. First, longitudinal data are lacking--either concerning changes in behavioral mechanisms of control at the state and federal level or concerning the exact process by which decentralization has occurred. A more compelling reason, however, is that state and federal levels of analysis are not the relevant context for Alaska's rural schools. Students of decentralization argue that perceptions of decentralization and centralization depend on where one sits in an intergovernmental system.[4] For school building and community in rural Alaska, the relevant external reference point is most likely to be the regional school district, autonomous in the case of cities and boroughs, and quasi-autonomous in the case of REAA schools. By law, school district boards are the responsible agents of education, and superintendents, the chief officers of the boards, are the relevant administrators of schools.

Preliminary data analysis indicated that there was not a continuous variable of localization-centralization, whether we defined district centralization as 1) the perception that the district board was active in all general phases of governance, or 2) the perception that the board, superintendent, and district staff were influential.

Professionalization. A third area of interest in preliminary data analysis was the influence of educational professionals--teachers and school administrators, including principals and superintendents.

Social Environment. A fourth area was the school social environment, particularly the local responsiveness of teachers and principals at the school building levels, reflected in a "warm" or "cool" school milieu for students, and the climate of expectations regarding them. We thought this might mediate the influence of organizational factors as well as perhaps have an independent effect.

Sampling Methodology

We continued investigation of the principal survey data in order to understand the major variance across rural schools, which would allow us to form indices on the basis of which we could organize in a meaningful way the universe of rural schools.

The Localization Index. First, we analyzed the degree of association between all items related to community participation in school operations, influence over school processes, and effects that could be called local ("socialized effects" included such items on the survey as special school services for the community, opening the school for community use, courses or topic sequences in Native languages, culture, local history, and vocational courses related to the local economy. The curriculum items were most relevant). After repeated tests, we were unable to find even a moderately strong association between actual localization of curriculum and participation or influence. We hesitated to use any measure of local curriculum or schedule alone, because: a locally controlled school might elect to use an academic curriculum and standard schedule, in the belief that this would achieve more effectively the objectives of parents and youth.

Second, we examined inter-item correlations of the perceived participation and influence of all actors that could be defined as local--(advisory) local school board, parents/community, students, teachers, and principal. We did this first for a selected list of processes we thought were most important (staff hiring and curriculum) and then for all processes additively. Students as actors were not perceived to be associated with any other group, and few principals thought students either participated or were influential in school operations. There was a weak correlation between parents as actors and the local board. And there were weak associations between principals and teachers, and teachers and school boards.

What surprised us initially was that principals saw themselves as acting in collaboration with local boards. There was a moderately strong association between their perception of the influence of local board and principal, a Pearson correlation coefficient of .43. While we thought principals might be biased, and inflate their self-reports on actual participation and influence over local school operations, the effect of such a bias would be to weaken, not strengthen the association. Also, those we consulted suggested there tended to be a covariance of principal and board activity in local school governance.

The final index of localization cumulated total participation scores of local board and principals and weighted scores for their perceived influence in school governance. We divided this index into equal thirds, ranking all schools as either low, moderate, or high in localization.

The Regionalization Index. To prepare this index, we analyzed the degree of association between all items and the perceived participation in school operations and influence over school process of district-level actors (the superintendent, district board, and district staff). We found no strong association between actual district influence (whether district policy was followed in calendar and daily school schedule) and the perceptual indicators. As expected, we found our strongest association to be that between superintendent and district board (with a Pearson coefficient of .63). Principals tended to see superintendents and regional boards as likely to act together in influencing local schools. The regionalization index cumulated participation and weighted influence scores for these two regional actors. We also divided this index into equal thirds, ranking all schools as either low, moderate, or high in regionalization.

Educational Professionals. In the eyes of building principals, there was no strong patterning of professional activity and influence that affected local school operations. What we saw in the data initially as a weak association did not strengthen under repeated tests, and there was insufficient basis to use the variable in stratifying the universe of schools.

School Social Climate. We saw strong associations between the climate variables, but in preliminary analysis the several indices we used did not appear strongly associated with localization or regionalization.

Two additional operations gave us further confidence that stratifying the universe of rural Alaska schools by localization and regionalization made good sense. First, the intercorrelation between localization (as we operationalized it) and regionalization showed a moderate inverse relationship (a Pearson correlation coefficient of -.37). Second, a series of test runs of the control variables school size, ethnicity, and income of school community with the two indices showed no strong relationships. More importantly, work on these variables indicated that the strength of relationship among standard control variables alone was no greater than on the localization-regionalization axis. In other words, we would learn as much about school practices by employing the localization/regionalization dichotomy as we would learn by focusing on Native versus caucasian schools or large versus small schools.

Chapter 3 discussed the differences between small city school districts (those having no more than 2 or 3 schools) and BIA schools. A practical consideration forced us to treat BIA schools along with REAA and borough schools. During the year of field research, half of the BIA schools in Alaska were transferred to the REAAs, and negotiations began for the transfer of the remaining schools. Thus we had only two sampling lists: a short list of schools in small districts, and a long list of rural schools in large districts, including BIA schools.

We then stratified the long list of schools by localization and regionalization, which produced a sampling matrix of nine cells:

Table 1. Distribution of School Control

		Regionalization		
		Low	Moderate	High
Localization	Low	4 %	8 %	21 %
	Moderate	9	16	9
	High	20	10	3

Forty-one percent of the schools fell into pure types of control, and an additional 16 percent stood midway between. The remaining schools represented potentially interesting variations of the variables, but they were less easy to classify into discrete categories at the stage of sample design; for this reason, we pooled them into a large residual category. We then listed schools by type and drew schools randomly from the list in rough proportion to their percentage of the universe. We had earlier decided on a sample of approximately 10 percent of all rural schools, which determined the sampling interval used. Because of our interest in localized schools, we oversampled from this type, selecting randomly two additional schools.

From the short list of 45 schools, we randomly selected four schools. For each type we selected a substitute school in the event we had difficulty traveling to any school or developing access to it.[6]

The Sample of Schools

Our sample of schools included 28 communities that represented well the diversity of local school operations in rural Alaska. Regions of the state were relatively well represented. The only major region not included was the North Slope. However, there were several schools in the Inupiat culture area, in the adjacent school district.

The sample represented grade levels relatively well too, there being a plurality of K-12 schools, followed in frequency by elementary and secondary schools. School size was represented, with schools having enrollments under 100 students being in the majority. And the sample represented roughly the ethnic and income distribution of rural communities. Most of the schools were majority (80 percent or more) Native, but there were ethnically mixed schools, and at least five schools had non-Native majorities. There were schools in resource rich and resource poor regions.

Field Research

A research guide outlining field work and presenting data collection instruments was developed based on the politics of education literature.[7] We circulated this to educational researchers and to school actors throughout the state, and following revisions, pretested all field instruments in two of the sample sites. During the 1981-82 school year, we conducted studies in each of the 28 field sites, visits of an average of four days in length. We interviewed key participants in school governance--principals, teachers, board members in communities, local political notables, and in some cases students. We visited district offices for each of the school sites and there interviewed superintendents, district board members, and district staff personnel. Over the course of the study, we talked to nearly 400 individuals. (The appendix discusses the data collection instruments of the project in detail.)

Analytical Types of Educational Control

Field research convinced us that the perceptions of principals and principal teachers, upon which we had constructed the sample of schools, were generally accurate reflections of the conditions of influence and control over local school operations in rural Alaska. In addition, field research made it possible to understand the configurations of influence at work in the large, residual group of schools.

Research on schools of the residual category indicated that the fine distinctions we had made--by dividing the indices of localization and regionalization into equal thirds--did not correspond to empirical reality. That is, several of the sample sites drawn from the residual category had index scores closely resembling those of the pure types of localized and regionalized control. Therefore, in interpreting the results of field research, we have taken a second stage cut of the sampling frame. This increased slightly the proportion of both localized and regionalized schools, and correspondingly reduced the residual category. In the following sections, we describe the general characteristics of the schools clustered in each analytical type, as an introduction to the comparative analysis of case studies that follows in Chapters 5-8.

"Localized" Control

Localized schools are those in which most operations are determined by a principal or principal teacher, in collaboration with a local educational committee or (advisory) school board. Twenty-five percent of the some 300 rural Alaska schools fall into this category.

The localized schools are more likely to be REAA or BIA schools than schools in city or borough school districts. Only three of the schools meeting our definition of localized were part of a borough district; a slightly larger number within the type were REAA than BIA schools.

Half of the localized schools are small, having fewer than 50 students, and in this respect they are like regionalized and mixed schools. They are somewhat more likely to be Native majority schools, which is a consequence of the larger number of BIA schools included in the local type than in any of the others. The localized schools do not differ significantly in community income (as measured by revenue sharing receipts of the community, and number of Title I students in the schools). Finally, localized schools are somewhat more likely to be isolated, in the sense that they are not connected to the state's road system, than schools in the other types.

"Regionalized" Control

Regionalized schools are those in which most operations are determined by the district superintendent, in collaboration with his office staff and a district school board. Twenty-four percent of rural Alaska schools fall into this category.

Seventy-five percent of the regionalized schools are found in REAA districts, 21 percent in borough school districts, and the remainder (two schools) are BIA schools in agencies that exercise control over their operations.

The size of regionalized schools tends to be only slightly smaller than localized schools, and about average for all rural schools. In ethnicity, regionalized schools are also primarily Native majority, but a larger number have more than 20 percent non-Native students than is the case of localized schools. In community income, there are no significant differences between regionalized schools, localized and mixed types. Finally, a slightly larger percentage of the regionalized schools have road access than is the case for localized schools.

"Unified" Control

By "unified" we mean those small school districts having between one and three schools at one geographical location, in which operations are controlled by both school and district office factors. Fifteen percent of rural Alaska schools fall into this category.

The greatest number (56 percent) of the unified schools are within city school districts. However, three of Alaska's boroughs resemble more closely city school districts regarding their systems of control over schooling than they do regional, area-wide systems of administration. And some 20 percent of the unified schools are within REAA districts. These districts were established primarily for the purpose of administering schools on military installations.

The unified schools are the largest in enrollment and staffs of schools in rural Alaska. Three-fourths of them have over 100 students. Of all rural Alaska schools, the unified type most closely resembles that of urban schools in Alaska and in the contiguous-48 states.

In ethnicity, unified schools are also dissimilar from most rural schools. More of the unified schools have a mixed enrollment of Native and Caucasian students than a situation of Native or caucasian majority: both Native-majority and Caucasian-majority schools are less numerous. Alaska's rural cities (regional centers with a population from around 1,000 to 2,500) have experienced a great deal of ethnic succession in the past generation, and rural cities are today gaining in population more rapidly than are villages.

Socioeconomic characteristics also distinguish the unified school communities from the other types. City school districts by law are obligated to assess property or other taxes in order to make a local contribution to education, and most communities within this type have a tax base. Community income is correspondingly higher than in localized, regionalized, and mixed communities.

However, with respect to transportation and communication, the unified schools resemble closely localized and regionalized types. A small number are connected to the state's road system, but a slightly larger number are in Southeast Alaska and connected to the marine highway system.

Mixed Control

This type includes a very small number of schools in which there is a vacuum of influence and an equally small number of schools in whose operations most school actors are involved. Most mixed schools, however, are mid-range between local and regional forms of control, but there is no dominant characteristic. In some there is conflict over who should control school operations, in others there is rivalry and competition without conflict, and in still others influence is shared. Thirty-six percent of rural Alaska schools fall into the category of mixed control.

Three-quarters of the schools we have labeled mixed are in REAA districts. But 20 percent are borough schools--either outlying communities in areawide boroughs such as Kenai and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, or in rural regional boroughs, such as the North Slope. Less than 5 percent of the mixed schools are BIA schools.

There are no significant size differences between mixed schools and those which are localized and regionalized. Most of the schools are Native-majority, but there is a slightly larger number of mixed ethnicity schools within this type than in the localized or regionalized groups of schools. Indicators of community income showed that schools in the mixed type resembled unified schools more than localized or regionalized ones.

In summary, based on empirical analysis of responses of school building-administrators in rural Alaska, we created four analytical types of educational control. These types provide a new perspective on rural Alaska school operations. The route to understanding the outline differs from conventional explanations based on such variables as degree of professional control, social climate of schooling, ethnicity, school size, or socioeconomic factors. Three types of school control--local, regional, and mixed--appear to operate in largely similar environmental conditions. For schools in the unified control type, however, the impact of exogenous variables is great. In one respect, localization of control, these schools compare with the localized schools. In other respects, however, they differ.

In the following four chapters, we discuss our field research findings, supplemented by analysis of statewide surveys and aggregate data available to us. One purpose of this discussion is to ground our analysis in examples and experiences of organizational styles and operation of regionalized, localized, unified, and mixed schools. The larger purpose is to indicate the extent to which the pattern of control--both its distribution and its amount--are related to educational outcomes.

NOTES

1. Frederick M. Wirt and Michael W. Kirst, The Political Web of American Schools, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1975, and Samuel B. Bacharach, "Organizational and Political Dimensions for Research on School District Governance and Administration," in Bacharach, ed., Organizational Behavior in Schools and School Districts, New York: Praeger, 1981, pp. 3-38.

2. Arnold S. Tannenbaum, Control in Organizations, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968, pp. 14-15.

3. Two independent sources of data established the general accuracy of what principals told us in Spring 1981. First, surveys of teachers and superintendents reported agreement with principals' rankings in nine of eleven areas of participation and seven of eight areas of influence. Second, field research in rural communities allowed us to collect information from several actors and this tended to confirm what principals had reported the previous year.

4. Steven S. Cohen, et al., "Decentralization: A Framework for Policy Analysis," Berkeley, California: Project on Managing Decentralization, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.

5. Our use of the concept school social climate is based on its development and analysis in Wilbur Brookover et al., School Social Systems and Student Achievement, New York: Praeger, 1979.

6. This was necessary for one school, which it was not feasible to visit during field research. The site was remote and would have been more expensive to visit than the project budget could afford.

7. In preparing data instruments we used a series of questions and some scales from previous studies, including the school social climate indicators in Brookover, 1979, questions from Zeigler, Professionals Versus the Public, 1980, and Cistone, ed., Understanding School Boards, 1975.

CHAPTER 5. REGIONALLY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS IN RURAL ALASKA

One-fourth of Alaska's rural schools are most influenced by a district superintendent, district office staff, and district school board. This would seem an unexceptional circumstance in most parts of rural America outside of Alaska, particularly when we consider the very small population of students (only 12,000 students attend school outside Alaska's cities). Yet in Alaska, schools within rural districts may be farther apart than the distance between New York and Washington, D.C., and communication from the district office to the school site may be more difficult than between that office and a foreign country. Too, the cultural and social differences between the "district office complex" (individuals working at district headquarters and board members regularly in contact with it) and aboriginal communities may be greater than those between a highly centralized office in a central city, such as New York, and suburbs or inner-city areas with minority populations.

Eight of our 28 sample sites were regionally controlled schools. Four of these schools were from the same rural school district, and this provided the best opportunity for us to examine the relations between local community and regional office and board. Each of the other four schools was from a separate school district. One of these districts was led by a superintendent who is strongly committed to local control of schooling, and most of the schools in this superintendent's district appeared to be influenced most strongly by local school boards and staff. However, the site we selected randomly was not, and the teachers, administrators, and local board members agreed to the designation of regional control. In the three other districts, there were regionally controlled, locally-controlled, and mixed patterns of control. A question we asked was why district policy was not more influential.

More than 70 rural schools fall into the regionally controlled type, and our sample of eight schools represented well the variation in socioeconomic and climatic conditions. One of the schools was in a very small community on the Alaska peninsula with fewer than 50 residents, and where the leading concern was whether the community would have enough children in future years to qualify as a site for a school. Another school, directly off the road system in interior Alaska, was in a place that lacked a community: the 200 individuals living along the road did not cohere into a unit for any purpose other than education.

The other school communities resembled most Alaska rural places in that there were limited opportunities for adult year-round employment. Commercial fishing was the mainstay of two relatively rich communities. Subsistence pursuits figured prominently in almost all communities, with the target species varying by climate--from fish and crab in the southwest, to fish and small game along inland rivers. Native populations included interior Athabascans, Yupik Eskimos, and Aleuts. Two of the eight communities had majority Caucasian populations, and another had a Caucasian minority.

Social conditions varied too. In one of the villages, there appeared to be an extremely high degree of social integration and mutual support that seemed to present nearly ideal conditions for education. In another, there were conditions of poverty and lack of social development in the town--as well as continuing and intense alcohol problems experienced by the townspeople. In this village, the catastrophic social conditions taxed the resources of the staff and made nearly meaningless a discussion of organizational control over the school. Alcohol problems figured to some extent in four of the other communities.

Our discussion of regionally controlled schools will blend a variety of data sources. Where we have information that applies to all rural Alaska's regionally controlled schools, as we do for superintendents, principals, teachers, and board members and selected outcome measures, we will use it to understand this type of control. Our discussion will also incorporate a large number of comments drawn from interviews conducted in the eight regionally controlled sample sites. We use these as examples of conditions that appear to apply generally to the type (or that indicate significant exceptions). Because we promised confidentiality to all informants, we have not attributed comments to particular individuals, and we have disguised sites where necessary.

Regional Office and Environment

In rural Alaska, school district boundaries for the most part parallel the boundary lines of Native regional corporations and also legislative districts. This was one intent of the 1975 legislation: to create districts that were homogeneous in culture and economy that would be the basis for future local governments. For example, two of the REAA districts had initially been a combined district. They divided because they were under two different regional corporations. But in almost all of the regionally controlled schools, there was no tight linkage between economic and political leaders and the members of the regional school board or regional office and superintendent.

In general, the five school districts with regionalized schools were relatively isolated from their regional environment. The first district (it included four of the eight schools discussed in this chapter) in western Alaska had on its board two persons who were board members of the Native regional corporation or nonprofits, and one board member who was a "pioneer" Alaskan and well-connected to regional and statewide political leaders. However, district school policy did not appear to be significantly influenced by these relationships. Moreover, district office professional staff were selected entirely from outside of Alaska and were not regarded as very responsive to needs of Natives or Caucasian oldtimers in the district.

Three board members and one staffer of the second district (in southwest Alaska) were directors of regional or village Native corporations and businesses (in this case canneries and resorts) that had influence in the area. The curriculum of the schools in the district appeared to be influenced to some extent by these regional forces--there was an emphasis on vocational education classes--but staffing and financing patterns were not.

The headquarters of the third district was located outside the geographical area of the district's schools, in an urban location. The logistical problems of holding board meetings and arranging travel in this region militated against social environmental influence over district staff operations. Two of this region's board members were political influentials in the region, but infrequently attended board meetings. In this district, there was conflict between the Native nonprofit association and the district office. A district staffer said:

> When we first became a district, they said they were out to get us. Maybe it's because they live on soft money and they feared competition from us.... (They) have such a bad track record that it's not good for our image to be too close to them.

The fourth and in some respects the most interesting rural district (in interior Alaska) was completely insulated from regional and local pressures. In an area where one-third of the residents were Natives, no board member or district staffer was Native or had ties to Native corporations or nonprofit associations. Although board members did represent business interests of the town where the district headquarters was located, none of the businesses were regional in scope, and the character of the school program bore little trace of the impact of economic organizations.

A few districts with schools in the sample (mostly in the mixed control category) have incorporated regional economic and political forces into the district decisionmaking process. The "enactment" of these environmental influences has sometimes had a negative impact on the political stability of the district, resulting in changeovers of district boards, superintendents, and staff in some cases, as well as in the modeling of district curriculum and staffing along lines consonant with goals of Native regional corporations and nonprofit associations. Only in the fifth district (which had just one regionally controlled school) was there penetration of regional forces, including churches, into local school operations. In this district, the effect was not to destabilize school operations; the impact of regional environmental forces curtailed autonomy, from the perspective of local board members and staff.

In short, each of the districts had opportunities for incorporation of the regional social and political environment into the district operations and those of local schools. In all sites but one, however, the district office was essentially insulated from regional and local pressures.

State-level institutions had an obvious impact on all five districts, but they tended to stand at arm's length from them. One superintendent had had difficulties with the state Board of Education. Most reported some problems with the state Department of Education. Said one:

> The political reality is that DOE has a lot of influence. A lot of these rules are negative. (But) we'd be foolish to make enemies in DOE.

The general tenor of remarks regarding state institutions, however, did not seem to differentiate districts with regionally controlled schools from the other districts in rural areas.

Administrative Relationships in Regionally Controlled Schools

By definition, the regionalized schools are subject to more centralized control (from the district office) than the other types of schools. This section specifies the nature of administrative relationships in the district office, and between it and principals and teachers.

District Office Organization and Processes

One unique characteristic of the regionalized schools, was the centralization of authority in the district office complex (with the superintendent being the *de facto* chief administrative officer). In most regionalized schools, a frequent comment of principals and teachers was that individuals in the system had to follow a "chain of command" and that "the superintendent calls the shots."

Centralization was manifested in a particular administration institution--the area principalship--which is found more often in districts with regionalized schools than those without. The institution is designed to centralize school administration functions in the district office. The area principal is itinerant, in that he makes periodic visits to each of the schools in his jurisdiction. Schools administered by area principals tend to be one- or two-teacher schools. One of the teachers might be designated "head" teacher for administrative reporting purposes. Five of the eight regionally controlled schools were supervised by area principals.

The consistent finding from our field research, however, was that local school operations were not invariably subject to the whim of the superintendent or district staff. In fact, when discussing how the school calendar was developed, several respondents in one village remarked that there might have been a memo from the superintendent setting the date, but they weren't sure. The pattern that seemed to apply was one of *political territoriality*, in which the superintendent and district office were jealous of their prerogatives regarding school operations, underlain by a relatively *loose administrative* coupling of district office to local schools. This pattern gave freedom to principals and teachers, but their control tended to be restrained. Examples from our field interviews bear this observation out.

District Office/Principal Relationships

During the three years of our study, none of the superintendents of the five districts with regionalized schools left office. In fact, there was more stability of district personnel within these districts than in most other rural districts in the state. Of the eight regionally controlled schools, however, three had new principal teachers during the year of field study, and three principal teachers transferred to other schools in the district (and in one case, out of the district) during the following year. Thus, there was local administrative instability in more than two-thirds of the regionally controlled schools, which was matched by a high rate of teacher turnover.

What appeared to be related to these factors of personnel mobility were personalism and uncertainty in the relationships of district office and local school staff. The principal teacher of one village appeared to be on the best of terms with the regional superintendent. He described administrative relationships in these terms:

> There's an open door policy down there. If you need to see _____(the superintendent), you just walk in.... I think that the staff and the feeling in the district office is a warm environment.... If we ever need help they come.

If fact, while the interviewer was in the village, this principal teacher visited the district office (a 45-minute snowmobile ride away) three times.

Two other principal teachers in the same district had different feelings about district office support, however. A new principal teacher commented:

> They seem to understand what my responsibilities are. But I don't understand what my responsibilities are. They haven't made it clear to me. There are no conflicts, but rather I just feel uneasy because I'm not clear on what I'm supposed to be doing.
>
> You see, we came in a week before school, 'cause I wanted to find out what my responsibilities were and what I had to do. Now they told me that when we came somebody from the office would come down here with us and get us started. I called the secretary before we arrived and told them that we were coming out. But it wasn't until the day before school started that anyone came here from the district office.
>
> Most of the time they just say to me, "Do whatever you wanna do." So a big problem is just not knowing what's going on.

A veteran principal teacher in another village said:

> The problem is that you don't get any direction in this district. The super and the district staff don't give you the direction you need. I'd say the biggest problem is just your uncertainty about where you stand. A lot of this is due to the lack of leadership on the part of the administration.

Finally, a principal teacher in a school of the third district said he had very little contact with the superintendent. Other district staff had visited the village several times, but: "They are just in and out.... They always act like they don't want to get caught here. It's like they're afraid to spend a night out in the bush."

These comments do not apply universally. In two other schools, principal teachers had such great difficulty getting in touch with the district office, that they had little to say about the definition of their responsibilities (or lack thereof) at the district office. And principal teachers in three other schools were so secure in their relationships with area principals and superintendents that the ambience of the district office and specified instructions on their roles were immaterial to them.

Thus, if we are to generalize to all regionalized schools on the basis of our eight cases, we would have to say that superintendent/principal relationships were characterized by personalism or uncertainty, and the uncertainty was likely to be a consequence of environmental conditions.

District Office/Teacher Relationships

Relations between teachers and the district office complex tended to be personalistic as well. Teachers unions tend to be weaker in rural than in urban schools, because of the obvious differences in number of teachers among other reasons. The one district that incorporated regional political forces had "cordial to warm" relations with the association. The superintendent described them in these terms:

> I have good ties with them. I'm also a member. Whenever I'm not going to retain a teacher, I always contact NEA's Alaska field representatives, as a matter of courtesy.

In the other four districts, teachers' associations had ambivalent to poor relations with the district bureaucracy and board, and there were no linkages of the teachers' association to the district office complex (except that negative experiences in contract negotiations had produced adversarial relationships in one district).

In four of the districts, teacher inservices were held sporadically and were conducted in Anchorage as often as in the region. Too, teachers were discouraged from participating in the annual NEA/Alaska conference.

In six of eight field sites, teachers were strongly critical of the superintendent and district office. Teachers complained about the lack of pre-service training and opportunities for professional growth; they claimed that communications from the district office were poor or non-existent, and the district office lacked credibility; and they felt left out of the decisionmaking process in the district. Furthermore, teachers feared that there would be reprisals if they were to complain. Yet in all schools in the districts (in 1982), teachers felt they were in charge of their own classrooms.

Professional Training and Development. A frequent complaint concerned the lack of preparation new teachers received. There was no systematic introduction to the district or its educational system. For example, a new teacher said:

> (Last year) there was no inservice, no preparation for new teachers coming in. I saw someone at the airport in _____ by accident when we came through, but that's all the preparation we got before we came out here.

More important, new teachers were not informed about the social conditions of the village, particularly where alcoholism was a problem:

> Nobody at the district office ever told us that _____ had a drinking problem. We felt things had been misrepresented to us. Like we never knew that we would have to put up kids from families where there was a lot of drinking.... They are really drunk all the time here....

A second teacher (from this village), from the home state of the superintendent, was also disturbed by the lack of information concerning the community:

> They told us there was drinking here, but that it was like the same thing you'd find in _____ (his home town). I can't think of a place there where everybody in the whole town gets drunk at the same time.... We walked through town and there were just drunks lying all over the place.

Teachers also claimed that the district office stymied their plans for professional growth, or was insensitive to these needs:

> When I talked to _____ (the superintendent) about our desire to attend summer school, I found out that they would not allow us to take personal leave in order to stay long enough to finish the summer session.... It tends to inhibit the professional growth of your staff.

In few regionalized schools were teachers very satisfied with the support from the district office.

Communications with the District Office. Teachers gave us the impression that they did not know what district policy was, or how it had been developed. To many teachers in regionally controlled schools, the district office was a "foreign entity."

> Usually we hear things through the itinerant teachers, but even they who work out of _____ (the district office) don't always know. In other words, communication is just not very good at all.

There were no complaints about lack of formal notification, for central office memos to the regionalized schools abound. But there appeared to be little credibility to what the district office said, as far as many teachers were concerned:

> I'm skeptical about anything that comes from the district office. Like when they say to us "This will happen on a certain date." I've gotten to the place where I don't believe that at all.

The problem of communications was aggravated in most of the schools with area principals. In these schools, there had been disputes about authority, and, said a district staffer, "The teachers didn't know whom to report to."

Even in schools with building principals and relatively good relations with district office staff, "communications have been a real big problem" (said that district's superintendent).

Lack of Participation. Teacher dissatisfaction was partly based on their inability to affect district policy through participation in fairly routine governance processes. One teacher commented:

> They send out a memo that this and this and this will happen. Or the area principal will come out and say you have to do this, this, and this. It's pretty tough to make input. You usually don't know about things until it's too late, until the decision has already been made. There's nothing the district does, nothing, to foster intradistrict communications.

Most teachers were of the opinion that "Decisions are usually made by the time you found that something is up."

One district board member thought that problems of communication and participation might have an effect on teacher turnover in the district:

> We should be getting the best educators in the world if we're paying the best price in the world. It seems like we're getting short changed. When we do have good educators out here they leave because of all the b...s... in the system.

Fear of Reprisals. A widely shared perception in the regionalized schools was that any criticism of the superintendent or district office would affect evaluations and lead to outright dismissal. One teacher put this in the context of the annual evaluation process:

> I think this (teacher evaluation) is part of the paranoid syndrome that I see in this district. The thinking is that if he gives you a little criticism then you're going to be fired. The problem with the evaluation process is that I think it's used for leverage for hiring and firing, and not for the improvement of performance.
>
> In this district you might have to worry about physically defending yourself if you disagree with something. The message is clear. Don't make waves. For example, last year one guy was involuntarily transferred from _____ to ______ for being too outspoken.

Control of the Classroom. Teachers were not wholly negative about their experiences in regionalized schools. Most felt that they were in charge of what went on in the classroom, irrespective of the lack of support and sometimes contradictory instructions from the district office. One teacher remarked that the district staff "should be more concerned about the teaching" than about "superficial things." He went on to say that "What goes on in my room is under my control and if they don't like what I'm doing, they can get rid of me."

In a second village, a teacher remarked "I'm pretty much left to my own devices, and I don't hear from my supervisor unless I've done something wrong." In still another village, the principal teacher said "The general feeling is that the teachers are responsible for the school, and there are very few people in the village who've opposed that practice."

Indeed, the perception of teachers was that villagers supported them in the classroom. An experienced teacher remarked: "The general attitude of the people in this village is that if the teacher says it, it must be so." This comment was repeated in many interviews, as for example:

> The advantages of this place are pretty slim. I guess the two best things are the kids are very good, and the parents give you pretty much free reign. You get the feeling that when the kids are at home the parents tell them to listen to their teachers.

This is not to suggest that teachers thought parents were supportive academically. Instead, as one teacher put it, "it may be that down deep they just trust us to take care of the academics."

Relationships between the superintendent and district staffers (including area principals) on the one hand and local administrators and teachers on the other were primarily dyadic, based on personal relations and necessary job connections. This pattern of relationships appears to be unique to regionally controlled schools. District superintendents of the regionalized schools appear to have established patron-client relationships with professionals in the district. Three of the five districts had a disproportionate number of teachers and staff members from the home state, previous job site, or university of the superintendent. In the fourth, there were subtle ties based on membership in the same religious congregation.

We have not pictured regionally controlled schools as caught up in an administrative web that resembles in any form the ideal-typic modern bureaucratic structure, for such a picture would fail to correspond to the realities observed in field research. There is a tight linkage between superintendents and district staff members (including area principals), and this linkage extends to some principals (or principal teachers) and teachers. The links are personalistic, however, and unrelated to professional norms and practices, for the most part. It is the nature of personalistic ties to be limited in extent: only a small number of individuals can ordinarily be drawn into dyads, cliques, and factions. Our conjecture is that the dissatisfied teachers in regionally controlled schools are outside this clustering of personalistic ties, yet aware of its existence and its impact on their influence over local school operations.

Political Relationships in Regionally Controlled Schools

The district environment may fail to penetrate deeply into regionalized schools, but this has not eliminated all conflict over school policy. A characteristic of conflict in this type of schools, however, is that it applies more to the local than to the regional level.

District Office/Board Relationships

All five of the districts had the same superintendent over the period of our study, and this stability in the superintendency was matched by stability on all but one of the regional boards. There were no recall elections in recent years, and few incumbent members of the five boards had met defeat at the polls. Each board had at least one member who had been on the board since schools were decentralized in 1976.

The district superintendents we interviewed engaged in a process of cooperative politics to insure that the board and superintendent spoke with one voice. One was manipulative in his approach to board politics. A board supporter said:

> The way I always thought was that it was the administrator's job to convince us that their way was the best way to go. If they could do that, then we'd vote whatever they wanted. _____(the superintendent) led the discussions more than anybody else. The chairman would bring up the subject, and then ____ would talk about it.

This superintendent's staffer remarked that his boss "has developed a rapport with his board so that they give, let's say, 75-80% of the responsibility."

A second superintendent, with a strongly held belief in board involvement, personally trained board members and encouraged their activity. He said "the school board members keep running for their positions and are re-elected. Part of my job is to promote the school board." Commenting on this superintendent's style, one district staffer remarked:

> _____ will sound out the board before he takes a stand. He's a real fence-sitter in some ways. If he comes on strong, he'll know they will support his action. He's most careful about sensitive subjects, for example local hire.... There are things that have to be handled diplomatically at every meeting.... They (the board) may say 'Don't bring it back to us until you have a recommendation.'

Two superintendents of districts with regionally controlled schools attempted to formulate some decision rules for board members, as one means of reducing conflict with the district office. The strategies these superintendents used varied, although for the most part their tactics were low-keyed and non-aggressive. The results were an impressive degree of harmony and the absence, with one exception, of divided boards.

District Office/Local Board Relationships

In none of the regionally controlled school communities was there a center of influence that competed with the district board or office. And the statewide survey of principals indicated that in over one-third of regionalized schools there was no local board of any kind.

Status of Local Advisory Committees. In one district, there were no local boards or advisory committees at all. In this district, active Community School Committees (CSCs) functioned after decentralization occurred. However, there was a frequent conflict between the district board and the CSCs. When the REAA legislation changed in 1979, this district board disbanded the local boards and has none in any of its schools today--notwithstanding parent and community dissatisfaction over lack of input into local school decisionmaking.

Two districts (including the one with four regionalized schools) had weak, essentially cosmetic, Parent Advisory Committees (PACs). Describing the interest in one of these committees, a principal remarked:

> At the first meeting, we had a room full of people. At the second meeting, there were two PAC members. At the third meeting, one PAC member, and at the fourth, nobody came.

The final two districts had CSCs that were involved in school processes in a limited way, but their participation was mainly advisory. We were most curious about the CSC in the district whose superintendent strongly supported local control. A district school board member implied the CSC had significant influence, saying "We let the CSC overstep their boundaries so that they can choose their principal teacher and teachers."

The school's principal teacher, however, contested this assessment. In her view:

> The board has never really exerted too much authority. This may be due to the way they're indoctrinated. The district office makes clear to the school board members that they are advisory. They know what they can do. They know that there are certain things I can't do.

A former CSC member attributed a reason to the district policy of limiting local influence. He said, "we're not Native and we do speak out, we're an embarrassment to them." In the mind of this board member, the community's influence was abridged because there was a large Caucasian population in town. Local control in this district meant Native control.

Comments in seven of the eight field sites pointed to the existence of substantial community apathy and inactivity concerning the schools. Representative comments were:

> The PAC is totally dormant, and only a few board members come. (PAC member)
>
> There's not a lot (of involvement) here. There's not a lot of interest in the school, except that it's here and it provides recreation for the kids. (teacher)
>
> People here don't care whether or not their kids get any education. (vice-mayor of a village)
>
> It's hard to get the people to participate in anything, the school, land planning, the council. (city council member)
>
> Hardly anybody goes to meetings around here, any kind of meetings. (PAC member)
>
> People feel they are meetinged-out here. There are just too many meetings for everybody. (RSB member)
>
> Most people have just given up.... We had to work hard to get someone to run for the school board the last time. (CSC member)

Explanations for Lack of Local Involvement and Participation. While there was nearly universal agreement among those interviewed concerning apathy in regionalized school communities, the explanations for this condition varied. Several respondents mentioned the general lack of interest in meetings where there was "really nothing to discuss...so there's no point in going." An active PAC member in another village said: "People have been away a lot, trapping and fishing, and it's real hard to get a quorum"--the implication being that PAC meetings stand low in the calculus of interest of community members. A teacher in western Alaska put a different construction on this lack of interest:

> The school doesn't mean anything to them (the parents) yet. There isn't any need for reading, for example. They can get along without it. There's a lack of motivation. The kids are affected if their parents don't care.

A second reason advanced by some school actors concerned the lack of preparation villagers had for effective activity concerning the schools. A few teachers remarked that "these people are illiterate," and could not participate effectively. Shifting the responsibility to the district, one PAC member commented: "One of the big problems is that PAC members go into the whole business blind."

A district superintendent with considerable experience in rural Alaska educational administration suggested a third reason, conflict avoidance:

> There's a tendency to avoid conflicts in local communities. This makes people somewhat reluctant to solve things at the local level. They would rather we solve them here at the district level.

And a teacher in a different district said that:

> It's not their (Native parents) style to disagree in public. If they're going to disagree, they'll do it outside of a public meeting and work it out before they go to a meeting.

Related to this, and heard in many interviews, was the simple fear of participation in a western institution. A graphic illustration was this account by a principal teacher:

> We had a hard time getting a (PAC) together this fall. No one wanted to be on it. It's really strange. We had one meeting to get (a) member, and when I went in, he was actually hiding under the covers.

A local notable explained his community's lack of influence by saying, "Mostly, they find the whole process intimidating."

Several respondents pointed to the lack of social integration in the villages, that would spur residents into involvement in community affairs. Such views usually referred to alcoholism problems in small villages, but there were broader concerns, as expressed by a teacher in western Alaska:

> I don't think a PAC would work real well in this village at the moment. Because the village doesn't have its act together generally. Nobody here wants to accept responsibility.

Finally, several board members and teachers pointed to the lack of power of advisory committees. A regional board member, discussing the elimination of CSCs throughout his region, said "they didn't have a lot of say because the board could override any of their decisions." A teacher stated a similar concern:

> I think the local community has absolutely no influence.... I know that the village usually doesn't take the initiative, but if they were to do so, I don't know if the system would allow them to have more influence.

One frustrated PAC member who had tried to exercise influence complained:

> We don't know what our rights are. We went up to the school to evaluate the teachers. The principal told us it was illegal, that we could be sued by the NEA. We have never been asked to evaluate anyone....
>
> They haven't given us anything saying what our powers are. But everything we try to do they tell us, "You can't, you're only advisory." The village has no control over the school whatsoever.

Attitudes toward Increased Participation. Although there was some dissatisfaction about the lack of influential organizations in the community that could affect school operations, there was no general movement among villagers in support of increased citizen participation. PAC members felt that there should be greater activity and involvement--and more power--in local school boards. Teachers and administrators, however, were divided on this issue. Some thought PACs had less power than they should have, that, in the words of one veteran teacher: "The PAC should assume a role that gives them a fair amount of autonomy for their own schools.

Other teachers and administrators were sharply opposed to any increase in the level of local participation. One reason was a fear of oligarchic control of the board:

> They don't want it (local control). It would just be something for them to worry about and they don't want it. The fight to get more parents involved through the PAC is going on. The more power they get, it would be in the hands of two or three people only, so it would be like school boards everywhere, just one or two people running the whole show.

A second opinion, by a principal teacher, reflected deeper political cultural differences:

> My problem with the PAC is that you just don't know where you stand with them. They're very temperamental people. They get mad at a teacher and you don't know why.... When they're mad, they pout. Eventually they get over it, but in the meantime you have to suffer it.... I can't really say that the local school

> board steps beyond its powers. But they're very temperamental and that can be a big problem.... People up here don't understand the educational process.

Forms of Community Involvement. Comments about the "apathy" and "lack of interest" of parents and community adults implied that there was no community reaction at all to the schooling process in regionalized schools. This was not the case. In our statewide surveys of teachers and principals, we found a relatively high degree of involvement of parents in the form of attending conferences with their childrens' teachers. Given that almost all rural Alaska communities are quite sparsely populated, and teachers are highly visible members of these communities, teachers find many opportunities to discuss school matters with parents. In small, isolated communities, talking about school matters is a form of community influence over the schooling process.

In regionalized school communities, it appeared that influence was also applied through two interrelated means: activity of local notables who were sometimes local board members, and the "climate of opinion" within the village. One district board member in interior Alaska (whose wife was the most active member of the village PAC) expressed his influence in these terms:

> I have daily contact (with the principal). I try to talk to him quite a bit if we have a problem in the school. Instead of letting it explode we'll try to find a better way to settle it.

In a different district, a Native district board member explained lack of community involvement in terms of his own role: "Their attitude is they see Natives like myself on the board and they say, 'Oh well, he will take care of it.' I feel like I'm an overall representative for the district." In a third district, a regional board member stressed his role as a mouthpiece: "People aren't afraid to come to me to express their feelings. They will come to me when they are afraid to talk to _____ (the superintendent)."

In most of the eight regionalized school communities we visited, there was such an individual who spoke for the community. In two communities, however, this was an established, traditional leader who did not sit on a PAC, and the fact that this individual lacked a formal position presented difficulties of adjustment for school teachers, administrators, and sometimes PAC members. The most interesting case was of the southwest Alaska community where, in the view of the school staff, the PAC did not represent the community. A local notable had more influence than PAC members, and he used it. The principal teacher described how:

> _____ (local notable) has come to one meeting in two years.... He came up and stated specifically what he wanted to see. The (PAC) didn't say a word against what he said even though you could see they were cringing.

Community opinion may be a powerful vehicle for the establishment of control over school personnel and their activities in Native villages, as we saw in one of the regions we visited. The first case concerned a teacher and her spouse who had inadvertently insulted a community resident, who then began a campaign to oust them from the village. He spread falsehoods, and mobilized community opinion against the outsiders. By the time the superintendent arrived, the village was unified against the couple, and the superintendent had no alternative but to transfer them out of the village. (There was a similar case in another village with a regionalized school.)

In a second village of this district, the principal teacher sought and won election as city mayor. The defeated candidate's wife sat on the local PAC, and the family was perhaps the most prominent in the community. They were able to mobilize village opinion against the principal teacher and his wife, who had previously been very popular in the community. Within a year, the teaching couple transferred out of the village.

In both communities, school advisory committees were inactive, and bodies for conflict resolution were poorly institutionalized, in the western sense. One issue concerned an insult to a community leader, the second a struggle for power and status in the community. What both cases establish is that the power of the communities to influence who holds important positions was great, even though this was not reflected in the existence of a stable, virile local school board or local government. (One respondent spoke of the "unspoken government of the community.") A resident of a southwestern Alaska community stated confidently:

> You don't have to worry out here about the teachers not being any good. If they're not any good we'll run them out. If we don't like what's going on at the school.

We consider the role of informal processes and opinion climates again, when we discuss local and mixed types of control. The value of the examples for the present discussion is to introduce caution into the analysis. There is the possibility that regionalized systems may protect some local values as effectively as localized systems, especially those which impose an alien type of organization on a local community.

School Governance Processes

The relations of actors in regionalized schools are those of both conflict and avoidance. A review of major areas of school operations and decisions will give a different perspective on the influence of the district office complex.

Staffing

Selection of school personnel, particularly new teachers, was most influenced by personalistic criteria in the regionalized schools.

Superintendents and district staff paid relatively little attention to whether the applicant would fit into the social and cultural milieu of the district and community. In only one of the five districts, was there a hiring process that involved the community. In this district, the superintendent had followed a deliberate policy of community involvement, but his perception was that communities would sometimes prefer that he or others in the district office make the decision (and assume the responsibility).

Even the recruitment of classified staff (secretaries and custodial personnel) and teachers' aides appeared to be less subject to the influence of community leaders and values than was the case elsewhere. An area principal said of a hiring case in his school:

> We had three people apply for the cook's position, two Natives and one white guy. Now the village Natives felt it should be the Natives. They wanted to hire the Natives, for no other reason than he was Native. But the white had been to cooking school and had some experience. So I hired him. I took a little heat for that but it's more or less blown over.

In many of the districts there was the appearance of using professional criteria to hire staff. Only in a minority of sites, however, were they in fact used. For example, one superintendent told us that he hired individuals who had experience in rural Alaska education. But, the person he hired to serve as principal teacher of a school said he had no previous experience in rural Alaska, and went on to remark:

> In their hiring policies they don't seem to try and meet the needs of the school. For example, I'm the only returning teacher and when they hired new teachers they didn't seem to hire teachers to complement what I can teach. I'm a social studies person and what we really needed was a science and math person. But instead they hired _____, who is also a social studies person.

The selection process was far less pluralistic in regionalized than in other types of schools. Decisionmaking usually rested with the superintendent or assistant superintendent (in two cases, the area principals had strong powers of recommendation). Local boards were cut out, which in some districts represented a loss of influence. A PAC member complained, "When they hired _______ (teacher), it was CSC then. Now the PAC doesn't have anything to do with hiring teachers at all."

Curriculum

Three of the five districts had implemented district wide curricula, and the fourth was in the process of developing one. Only the fifth was "trying to get the CSC to meet and determine if they want a curriculum specifically designed for their village." For the most part, these curricula reflected an orientation to instruction in basic subjects as found in rural and urban schools of the contiguous 48 states.

However, in some of the schools, the district wide curriculum was not taught. An itinerant music teacher in one of the districts said he was in charge of his own curriculum. He had expected that someone would give him an outline of what he was supposed to teach upon his arrival in the district, but this did not occur. He received little direction at all and as a result had developed his own curriculum. A teacher in a different school agreed:

> There's really no district wide system of education here. We just have individual entities in each community. We don't have a district wide curriculum. There's no district wide policy on tardiness, absenteeism, or discipline. Textbooks are supposed to be district wide, but they're not.

Textbook selection, however, was likely to be relatively uniform in the regionally controlled schools. In addition to the constraints imposed by publishers, we found little deviation from the texts that present or previous curriculum coordinators had ordered for schools. One teacher remarked:

> The district has approved texts. I deviate from these when I feel that the approved texts are not gonna work. But I've never ordered texts that were not approved by the district. I've just used ones that were already here and available.

The districts were unique with respect to their Native populations and distinctive life styles of residents, but this uniqueness was not reflected in the curricula of most regionalized schools. For example, one of the districts contained a number of students who were either monolingual in the Native language or spoke it primarily. Yet schools in this district did not have an established bilingual education program, and where there were courses, they were not necessarily taught or supported. The principal teacher of a school in one district remarked: "We're supposed to have a bilingual aide for one hour a day, but I think it's ridiculous to disrupt the classrooms for one hour." An area principal in the same district supported this view by saying "I personally think that all the culture should be taught by the family or by the community, that it's not the role of the school."

There was strong community support for bilingual programs in the regionally controlled schools. Community members and particularly those who serve on advisory boards commented that "there is not enough bilingual now." Said one PAC member:

> We would like to see more language instruction, more cultural courses, courses in art. As yet we don't have any Yupik taught in the high school (it was taught in that village's BIA day school) and a lot of people would like to see that.

However, in the only regionalized school whose district had a bilingual language policy, community members did not want district curriculum policy implemented in the school. Complained on advisory board member:

> The district pushes bilingual. Every year we fill out forms about the language here in the village. Nobody knows Athabascan here, and none of the parents are interested in the kids learning it. There's no real Native heritage left here in the village, so there's no desire for it.

In short, most districts had a district wide curriculum (that was implemented in only half the schools) but no bilingual education policy. Communities of regionalized schools in these districts wanted Native language taught in the schools. In one district, there was a bilingual education policy, but the community we visited was opposed to this. In these areas, the schools were not representative of community desires.

Native culture courses in the regional schools were offered infrequently, and were not well integrated into the school program. One school with a mixed Athabascan-Caucasian student population had an half-hour weekly session in beadwork, as a concession to the traditional culture of the region. A school with a majority Yupik student population offered some training in Yupik Eskimo, given by a teachers' aide, and a topic sequence on sled making. There was interest on the part of local people, but no ability to develop programs. Said a western Alaska principal teacher, "We have Indian Education and JOM funds but we don't have the people interested in teaching courses." An interior Alaskan board president said:

> We've talked about it (local courses). We have local teachers who teach sewing and knitting and piano. But there is no one in town who could teach Athabascan things.

Commercial and subsistence fishing were major means of livelihood in communities of all the regionalized schools; however, the schools offered few courses related to these economic endeavors. One board member remarked "This is a fishing place. Why do they have a computer? We need some emphasis on the economic base of this village." Some attributed this to the lack of community interest, such as the teacher who said "a majority of them are only interested in how many nights they can get into the gym." Even if there were strong community support of such course, it seems unlikely it would be offered. District office staffs were not sanguine about the interest or ability of the districts to reach out to the community in this area. The curricula of regionalized schools reflected standard achievement norms--education in the basics, academic training leading in senior grades of the larger secondary schools to some college preparatory work

The process used in determining district curricula was like that used in staffing. A regional board member described it in this way:

> For proposed curriculum, we (RSB members) get involved heavily along with the super and the principal. Now they tell us that the teachers have had input into this, but as a board member, I don't know of any input from the local people or from the teachers, for that matter.

In three of the five districts with regionalized schools, regional nonprofit associations have taken over the role of providing a locally-relevant curriculum. Indian Education and JOM programs, for example, were operated by the regional nonprofit Native associations, teaching courses in sled building, skin sewing, and the like. They may use school facilities, but the programs were completely separate from the school's academic program. (In two districts, this was done at the request of the district office staff because they did not know how to operate such programs.)

A final curriculum area that has figured prominently in recent Alaska rural school politics is program evaluation and review. Under terms of the Tobeluk v. Lind consent decree that led to the construction of new rural high schools, elected village school communities were to participate in planning and evaluating the high school program. Every community with a "Hootch" school was to engage in such a review process, involving a systematic examination of every subject taught in the school, teaching staff and materials. Native respondents in regionalized schools were not satisfied with the extensiveness of this review, or with the amount of community involvement in it. In one village, there was pressure from the superintendent to sign forms, despite the chairman's wish to read first what she saw for the first time at the meeting. In a second village, PAC members who went to the OS regulations meeting at the high school were told that it was not necessary for them to be there. At least some PAC members felt that they were not wanted there.

Thus, in the important area of what is actually taught in the schools, regionalized schools provided little opportunity for community involvement. This is not to say that all other local actors lacked influence, however. Teachers, particularly, had an impact on what students were exposed to, but this was primarily as a reaction to policy initiatives of the board and superintendent. One teacher remarked in characteristic terms:

> We have to be constantly restructuring our program because of the school board. The school board changed the graduation requirements three times in one year. So, in other words, we've set up the instructional program ourselves.

Naturally, there are questions about the amount of professional influence under these terms of change.

Finance

In all of the five districts, the central office staff prepared a budget with participation in the development by the regional school board. Comments we heard in field interviews indicated that local community residents had little to say. A district superintendent stated "The budget is not an area in which I feel the CSCs want to be involved."

A teacher commented:

> The teachers don't see the budget at all. We didn't know what we were working with for supplies. We had no way of knowing when the money went and out of what funds. We had to plan activities without knowing how much money we had.

None of the schools of the regionalized category had discretionary funds available for local school use. A dissident district school board member said:

> I think we should give the villages a certain amount of money to do with whatever they want. But the board has fought this. I don't see how the villages can learn to manage their own funds if they're never given the opportunity to do so.

School Calendar

One of the areas in which local advisory school boards appear to have influence throughout the state is in determining the annual calendar of the school and the daily school schedule. In regionalized schools, however, this tended not to be an important activity of local community actors. In all cases but one, calendars were determined by the district office. One superintendent explained why:

> The opening date of school has been standardized the last two years, so we can conduct a district wide in-service at the beginning of the year. Before, the way it used to work was the CSC set it up. But what happened was that the CSC just rubber stamped whatever the teacher's suggestion was.

Reactions of teachers and local board members to district wide calendars tended to be unfavorable:

> Supposedly the PAC can make their recommendations and set the calendar. I found out that _____ (the area principal) had filled out his calendar to reflect his wishes, to have a long Christmas. That's the one that was pulled out of the hat, that was finally approved. ....This year, we're trying to get the calendar we favor approved by the PAC. (teacher)

> Last spring all the teachers were given a calendar to fill out. We did that, but the final calendar did not reflect out desire. (teacher)

> We heard that the calendar was already set even before we submitted our calendar. So that filling out this calendar was done just to make us feel that we were a part of it. (teacher)

> The principal teacher here used to ask when I was on CSC about the calendar. But lately they don't do this. (PAC member)

Clearly, the perception in regionally controlled schools was that artificial participation was encouraged, and it would have little effect on outcomes. Also, an area of activity subject to teacher's control in many districts was not uniformly subject to this influence in regionalized schools.

Facilities Design and Construction

Facilities use and the construction of new school buildings are important matters in small communities. As in most of the other areas of school operations, this area was limited to participation by the district office complex. The typical scenario is that village residents and teachers learn about the design and construction of new facilities when it is too late. As one teacher remarked:

> We just found out that the blueprints have already been drawn up for the new addition here. The materials are ordered and have already begun to arrive. No one on the staff had any input into this process, though the district says that we actually did.

And when villagers asked for particular facilities, they often did not get them. One CSC member commented:

> What we asked for we didn't get. We drew up plans for a multi-purpose facility for the high school, something we could use for community things.... We got a real piece of junk, and they paid $200,000 for it.

The issue in this case concerned proprietorship over buildings in the view of the district office. The district school board, by law, controls the facilities (which are owned by the state in the case of RLAAs), and in an extension of this concept, it controls the programs of the schools and the personnel who teach them. The local communities may advise, at the discretion of the district office complex. A dissident regional board member complained:

> What we're fighting at the district level is that the administration's attitude is that the buildings belong to the district. This is not in fact true. They belong to the community, but the administration doesn't seem to grasp this.

For its own reasons, the district was disinclined to accept the premise that ownership of schools lay in local communities. This attitude leds to the feeling in most regionalized communities that the school was disconnected from the community. One view heard frequently was that the school was "foreign turf." Another, perhaps more representative view was this statement of a western Alaska PAC member: "People don't have a sense that the school is theirs. It's not a foreign thing but it's not theirs."

Limited involvement in school governance processes seemed to describe the situation of all local actors in regionalized schools. Yet in the opinion of teacher, they had control over the classroom; and along with principals, controlled the learning situation in schools.

The Climate of Expectations in Regionally Controlled Schools

A number of studies have examined the impact of the orientations, expectations, and attitudes of school actors on student outcomes. Although we found no statewide patterning of principals' perceptions on a series of climate variables, we thought it possible that environmental and system control factors might be mediated by perceptions of educational professionals. We report a few measures on which principals in regionalized schools have distinctive attitudes.

Attendance at college may not be a realistic expectation for all rural youth, but the holding of such an attitude is a good indication of the academic orientation of school personnel. Among the questions we asked local administrators in our 1981 survey was what percentage of students in their school they expected to attend college. There were no significant differences between perceptions of administrators in regionalized schools and all other rural schools: a majority expected that less than 50 percent of the school's students would attend.

Asking principals to evaluate the quality of their schools' learning environment is one way of engaging attitudes of pride toward institution. This is what principals had to say:

Table 2. Principals' Perceptions of School Achievement (Regionalized)

	Regionalized		Other Rural Schools
Better than average/ among the best	44.0		31.0
About average	35.0		26.0
Below average/inferior	21.0		43.0
	N=249	$P < 0.0081$	

The differences between regionalized schools and all other rural schools virtually jump off the page. There are significantly stronger indications of pride in academic achievement and learning on the part of principals in regionalized schools than in any other type. (Teachers of regionalized schools were only slightly less enthusiastic about the climate of achievement and learning in their schools. Some 38 percent--compared to 25 percent of teachers in all other schools--thought their school's climate was better than average or among the best.) We controlled for ethnicity and school size and found several interesting patterns. The relationship between school type and attitude toward students' achievement was significantly weakened in schools with Caucasian or Native majorities. It was strengthened in schools of mixed ethnicity. And the relationship was weakened in larger schools, but strengthened in small schools (with fewer than 30 students).

Two other questions from the principal and teacher surveys provide information on the environment of learning for students in regionalized schools. We asked both principals and teachers what achievement level they expected of students in their schools. Respondents in regionalized schools were more positive than those from localized and mixed schools.

Table 3. Principals' and Teachers' Expectation of Student Achievement (Regionalized)

	Principal		Teacher	
	Regionalized	Other	Regionalized	Other
Above/much above national norms	45.3	29.9	38.3	23.7
At national norm	24.5	29.4	33.7	28.8
Below/much below	30.2	40.7	28.0	47.5
Principals N=251	$P < 0.0538$	Teachers	N=290	$P < 0.0618$

These relationships were strengthened for small and medium-size rural schools (with fewer than 111 students), but were weakened when ethnicity was controlled.

A final question from the principal survey provides a summary judgment on the reputation of the school.

Table 4. Principals' Perceptions of School Reputation (Regionalized)

	Regionalized	Other Rural Schools
Better than average/ among the best	63.4	56.0
About average	35.5	32.8
Below average/inferior	1.1	11.2
	N=239 $P < 0.0492$	

Regionalized school principals thought their schools were somewhat better than other rural and small schools in Alaska. Tests of school size and ethnicity indicated that this finding was not spurious--for small schools and those with a Native majority. Clearly principals of these schools were not influenced negatively by lack of control at the local level (perhaps because they were connected favorably to the district office). The teacher survey, however, indicated that teachers of regionalized schools were not significantly different from teachers of other schools with respect to perceptions of school reputation.

Regionalized School Outcomes

The obvious question returns: what difference does regionalization of educational control make so far as students, parents and communities are concerned? Our survey of rural schools has been largely cross-sectional, and we lack the time series data that would enable us to explain results definitively. But visits to rural school sites gave us the opportunity to collect a variety of outcome measures, and determine their degree of association with the control types we established. In ascending order of importance, these measures are standardized test scores, student adaptation to and retention in school, and parent/community satisfaction with school programs and governance.

Test Scores

The five districts did not use the same test series or follow a similar testing protocol. Moreover, in Alaska the statewide assessment data are not available for cross-school and cross-district comparisons, making it difficult to develop a comparative profile of student performance.

Nevertheless, we collected test data from six of the eight schools, and attempted to draw general inferences from them. Discussions on academic achievement with teachers and administrators indicated dissatisfaction. Said one area principal: "We're three or four grade levels below the norm. Now I don't think that's the teacher's fault. A lot of it comes from the culture." This assessment was widely shared.

Student Adaptation and Retention

Absenteeism rates for the nine regionalized schools were an average of 5 percent in the year when we measured this (by use of state DOE records checked against principals' responses to our survey). There were no significant differences between the rate in regionalized schools and that of all other rural schools. A principal teacher in southwest Alaska said,

> We hardly ever have any (absenteeism)...the reason may be that...some of the kids say, "I may not like school but it's better than being at home with a bunch of drunks." So unless they're sick they're always here.

In other communities where alcohol problems were great, teachers and administrators made similar comments. The only school with a high rate of absenteeism seemed to have rather unusual conditions. A district staffer said of its high school:

> We have a hard time keeping the high school boys in school. They come in late from fishing. They feel they need a vacation so they take off for a time. If they had to go out (of the community) to high school they wouldn't go at all.

State DOE records on student dropouts indicated that 74.2 percent of the regionalized schools had none during the 1981-82 academic year, as compared to 69.3 percent for all other rural schools. Only 10 percent of the schools had drop out rates in excess of 3 percent. School officials were generally pleased with their ability to retain high school age youth in the school, and several pointed to sharply declining drop out rates in their schools. Regionalized schools reported the lowest rate of vandalism: only 18 percent of the administrators of regionalized schools reported occurrences of destruction to school property, as compared to 28 percent of the administrators of all other rural schools. Moreover, in the vast majority of these schools, there was less vandalism directed toward the school building than toward other public buildings (if any) in the community. Finally, student suspensions were few, and there was only one expulsion in the eight regionalized schools we visited in 1981-82. These may seem to be significant signs of student adaptation and retention, but in the very small, sparsely populated communities of rural Alaska, they appear to be close to the norm.

Teachers' and administrators' comments on student behavior indicated a few problems. Alcoholism in some of the communities influenced student behavior in school. Said several teachers "the kids come to school and want to sleep." There were a number of problems with students' use of abusive language; and in one of the schools we visited, there had been a physical attack on a teacher. Community members' comments on student behavior were generally uncritical.

Parent and Community Satisfaction

In each of the communities in which we did field work, we administered a short "community survey" to a sample of adults who were not employees of the school or board members. We selected respondents on the basis of convenience, and the results do not necessarily represent the views of all community adults. But they are very suggestive of the extent to which the schools are supported in their communities.

Community Attitudes toward School Actors. The survey included a number of items soliciting opinions on each of the school actors we have identified above.

Table 5. Community Attitudes Toward School Actors (Regionalized)*

School Actor

Local School Board or PAC	% agree	% disagree
...is doing a good job	36.0 %	9.0 %
...does what most parents want	40.4	15.4
...tries to do something about problems in school	67.4	1.8
Talk to local board members often (once a month)	40.0	20.0
Principal		
...is doing a good job	61.9	11.1
...keeps people informed about the school	71.9	15.5
...does what most parents want	47.6	15.9
...tries to do something about problems in school	71.9	3.4
Talk to principal often (once a month)	51.6	18.8
Teachers		
...are doing a good job	64.6	7.7
...are very concerned about children in the school	57.1	7.9
...try to do something about problems in school	65.6	1.7
Talk to teachers often (once a month)	39.1	15.6
...take part in community activities in community	65.6	21.9
Visit teachers in their homes often (once a month)	40.6	25.0
...visit in my home often (once a month)	31.3	25.0
District Board		
...helps local board	49.2	23.8
...does what most parents want	23.4	39.1
...tries to do something about problems in the school	38.5	12.3
Talk to regional board members often (once a month)	10.9	35.9
Superintendent		
...helps local board	48.4	22.6
...keeps region informed about problems	36.5	34.9
...does what most parents want	17.7	30.6
...tries to do something about problems in the school	46.8	9.7
Talk to superintendent often (once a month)	7.8	45.3

N=65

*Most questions on the community survey had an undecided and don't know response category. These have been removed for these comparisons.

These opinions are illustrative of what people in regionalized communities think regarding relationships in their schools. At a glance they show strongly positive attitudes toward teachers and principals. When we compared respondents from regionalized school communities to those of other rural schools, these were the significant differences of opinion: they were more positive in their evaluation of teacher's work and opportunities for interaction with them. They were much more negative in evaluations of regional boards and superintendents than were respondents of all other sample sites. As we shall see in our discussion of localized schools, perceptions vary depending on the strength of institutions in the community and the district-local policy configuration.

Several items on the community survey asked for evaluations of school programs:

Table 6. Community Perceptions of School Programs (Regionalized)

	Good	Not Very Good
Teaching of math	56.3 %	4.7 %
Teaching of reading	53.1	6.3
Teaching of Native culture and languages	28.1	33.3
Training children for lives in community	33.9	11.3
Training children for lives outside community	24.2	12.9

Parents and community members appeared generally satisfied with teaching in academic programs. The teaching of Native culture, languages--was not well regarded, which was less a comment on the quality of the program than on the fact that regionalized schools were less likely to have them. These opinions were the most negative of all residents we surveyed in the 28 field sites. Respondents appeared to be non-committal regarding training for adulthood.

A final set of questions on the community survey gave residents the opportunity to express more general satisfaction and dissatisfaction with school and school/community conditions.

Table 7. Community Perceptions of School and Community Conditions (Regionalized)

Community Perception of...	% agree	% disagree
School calendar and schedule fit local needs	61.5 %	13.8 %
School is used for local activities	60.0	9.2
School has a good program in Native languages	24.6	33.8
Academic program is good	27.7	12.3
Teachers try to help the school and community	63.1	9.2
Parents support the school and take part in school activities	33.8	16.9
Principal/superintendent help meet local goals	32.3	16.9
School board helps to meet local goals	35.4	15.4
Students try hard to do their best in school	56.9	16.9

This table is a useful summary of community views regarding regionalized schools, if we keep in mind that it represents a very small sample of convenience and the obvious point that the questions and statements are general and ambiguous. Teachers fared well in this evaluation, better than administrators or boards--attitudes were more critical of them in regionalized schools of the sample than in any other type. School programs, however, were not rated very high, and as we have pointed out throughout this chapter, there was a general perception of a problem regarding Native languages and culture. To repeat, residents of regionalized schools were more critical of this aspect of schooling than respondents in any other type of school.

Patterns of Career Socialization in Regionalized Schools

Alaska's rural schools have operated a relatively short period of time within any given organizational structure. Borough school systems, which are the model for the REAA districts, have a history of less than 20 years, but even this is a short period in which to detect a mode of school operations. (The city districts, used as models too, have a longer history.) REAA districts have operated for only seven years as of this writing, and some have not yet emerged from the transition. Their board/administration relationships are unstable, turnover of personnel is very high, and their critical routines--of staffing, program development and evaluation--have not become imbedded in the practices of administrative and instructional personnel. In many ways they operate like the predecessor, SOS.

Nevertheless, on the basis of extensive surveys of rural school actors and our brief site visits to eight schools representing the regionalized type, we can make some inferences about the development of district and local school operations. The major factor was mentioned above--there is a loyalty syndrome and clientage network surrounding the district superintendent. It is disconnected from regional political and social forces for the most part, but it links superintendent, district office staff, and some board members into a pattern of authority. Whether a local school principal or teacher sits well with the district office complex is thus as important a factor in the treatment accorded the local school and staff as are professional criteria. In short, one clear track in career socialization is the development of orientations of loyalty to the district office and, to the limited extent it represents this, the region served by the district.

This is not to suggest that there is a lack of professionalism within rural schools that are regionally controlled. Teachers complain about the lack of support for professional growth and development, it is true, and they direct their harshest criticism toward the school district. That office, they say, is the greatest source of their problems. They say this, we surmise, because professional norms and values, which appear very important to teachers in regionalized schools, are not controlling factors of the school district environment. Teachers we interviewed were insistent that they controlled their classrooms, but professional control by teachers as conventionally pictured--through teachers' unions, administrative linkages with superintendent, district staff and principals, or linkage with an authoritative local board--was absent.

The situation this presents has important ramifications for the local community. It lacks significant influence over the selection and retention of teachers for its school, and there is no formal procedure it can follow to register dissatisfaction with a teacher who has violated local norms. In two instances community disapproval of teachers over whom the community lacked institutional means of influence resulted in informal mobilization of opinion that disrupted the community--and led to the ouster of the teachers.

Thus, to the extent there is professional control in regionalized schools, it is limited by the district office at the top and by community opinion at the bottom. The operation of this professional influence would appear to be uncertain indeed, and may explain the frustration we noted among teachers. We will return to the theme of professional influence again in our discussion of localized, unified and mixed types of control.

CHAPTER 6. LOCALLY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS IN RURAL ALASKA

Local advisory school committees operated in rural communities well before the state legislature decentralized control of education in 1975. Some were advisory committees mandated by various federal programs, such as Title I and Johnson O'Malley. Most, however, were school activity committees and lacked influence over staffing or curriculum in the schools. Yet they were a foundation for development of authoritative local boards, especially in communities distant from regional superintendents of the SOS system.

From decentralization of schools in 1976 until 1979, Community School Committees (CSCs) became quasi-autonomous school boards in many REAA districts, and were involved in each area of school operations. However, in several districts, CSCs were controversial organizations from the start. They tended to compete for influence with district school boards, which by law were responsible for policymaking. They muddied administrative waters, and were potentially bothersome to district office personnel. They also competed for influence with teachers' unions and were potential threats to teachers, to the extent that they influenced recruitment and retention actions. For these and other reasons, about one-half of the regional boards and district offices moved to weaken significantly the powers of the CSCs by making their position solely advisory (accomplished through amendment to the REAA enabling legislation in 1979). One fourth of the REAA districts abolished CSCs at this time.

While CSCs in REAA districts lost influence, the advisory boards of BIA schools gained authority, as both the change in supervisory relationships (e.g., weakening of agency office influence under PL 95-561) and imminent closure of BIA schools left a vacuum of influence that could be filled by local boards and leaders. Ironically, of the local level educational boards in Alaska in the early 1980s, the BIA school boards were the strongest.

Nine of our 28 sample sites were localized schools (representing one-fourth of Alaska's rural schools), and four of them were at the time BIA day schools (K-8). The 43 BIA schools remaining in Alaska in 1981 were mostly in western Alaska, Yupik Eskimo regions, with far more traditional community settings than found among other Native culture regions in Alaska. Three of the BIA schools we visited were on or near Norton Sound, and administered through the Bethel BIA agency office. The fourth, in the Bering Straits area, was administered through the Nome agency office. In each of these communities, there was also a "Hootch" high school, included within one of three large REAA districts.

The fifth field site was a "Hootch" school community within another western Alaska REAA district. The sixth and seventh field sites were from the Inupiat Eskimo culture area, and were part of that area's school district. The eighth field site was in an Alaska interior REAA district, where nearly half of the population was Athabascan (and the other half Caucasian). Thus, there was considerable cultural variation across the schools and field sites, which were somewhat more isolated from urban Alaska than is the norm for rural Alaska villages.

Local School And Environment

In describing regionally controlled schools, we noted that environmental forces--Native corporations and nonprofit associations, regional political notables, and state educational actors--were imperfectly integrated with the school system. The district office complex was almost a closed system regarding some school operations such as staffing, development of courses, and expenditure of funds. In "localized" school communities, however, the environment was represented on the board, and it influenced sharply the direction of schooling. Regional and statewide environmental factors, however, were less likely to penetrate schooling in these communities, with the exception of one school district.

"Enactment" of the Local Environment on the Board

In all of the localized school communities, major forces in village life were present on the local board, including different factions--which had an effect on board unity in three of the cases.

Boards of the four BIA schools were controlled by the traditional or IRA council of the village. One example was a school in northwestern Alaska with a powerful board that was the de facto village government. (In this community, there was no state recognized local government, and state and federal agency personnel were few and transient.) The board chairman presided over the IRA council. A middle-aged Yupik Eskimo, he was regarded as the most influential person in the village. He and other members of the board continued to follow subsistence pursuits, such as sealing, that have defined this community's system of life for centuries.

In the three other BIA school communities, board members were also influential in the communities. One of these sites had a factionated village power structure, and both factions were represented on the local school board.

Localized schools within the REAA system were no less strongly connected to their communities through the local advisory school boards (ASBs). The principal teacher of a high school on the coast said about his ASB:

> The ASB is the power base of the village. It means you have the support of the power, and the elders, but it can be very incestuous. It doesn't allow for a wide variety of views. But I

> do feel that the ASB members have their finger on the pulse of the village.

The ASB of a village on the Yukon River was headed by a long-term community leader who was, at the time of the site visit, developing support in the community for incorporation of a second-class city. This board too was unified, and composed largely of leaders of the traditional council.

Two villages in northern Alaska had somewhat weaker ASBs, largely because there was conflict between older and younger board members. That this community generational conflict was represented on the local board insured a strong connection between the village and the school.

Finally, the advisory board of an interior Alaska school was directed by the vice president of the village Native corporation, and two other board members were corporation officers. All board members were active in the village IRA council, and two were officers of it. This board doubled as a JOM committee and handled Indian education monies too. The ASB monopolized on village educational functions, and was coupled to other social and political organizations in the community.

In summary, most of the ASBs of the locally controlled schools were strongly linked to local sources of influence. Where ASBs had influence, community influentials sought seats on them. Given such a pattern of board-community integration, there was little question that schools were part of the community, and that social and political leaders felt the community had a proprietary interest in the school.

District-Level Pressures on Localized Schools

The four BIA schools were supervised through agency superintendents in Nome and Bethel, and during the year in which our field work was done, these federal agencies had extensive contacts with REAA district headquarters. The issue was the transfer of their schools to the state, the leading issue in all of the state's BIA schools in the early 1980s. However, agency offices were not penetrated by regional forces--such as Native corporations or nonprofit associations. (The nonprofit in one region worked around the bureau.)

A different situation obtained in the four REAA districts that contained the five state localized schools, and the penetration of regional forces had an impact on local communities and schooling in some cases. In one REAA district (with two schools in the sample), the superintendent and district staff had had extremely close ties with the leadership of the Native regional corporation and with the region's nonprofit association. These Native organizations, in turn, were represented strongly on the regional school board. The incorporation of regional pressures was in fact institutionalized in the form of district education and curriculum committees, which had representation from the Native for-profit and nonprofit organizations, among other regional groups. We note below the effect this incorporation had upon school programming in Native language and culture.

A second REAA district was closely connected to that area's center of power and influence--the large regional ANCSA corporation and non-profit corollary. The Native regional corporation, nonprofit association, and also commercial businesses of the area were represented on the district school board. District staff pointed to their strong interest in school programs.

The third and fourth REAA districts represented a different situation, in that the regional Native corporations did not have a strong presence in the region, and the Native nonprofit associations were troubled bodies lacking credibility. Consequently, there was much less interlocking of institutions than in the previous two districts.

State-Level Pressures on Localized Schools

BIA sample sites were influenced indirectly by the state education agency, because of the transfer negotiations. Localized state schools within REAA districts were more connected to the state's education and broader political system. One district was engaged in controversy with the state Department of Education over state regulations that, in the opinion of the district, applied poorly to the needs and conditions of schools and communities in the district. In the words of a district staffer:

> There is basic conflict between state regulation and local control. Some areas of regulations required by DOE have a direct impact on each school site.... It is a major responsibility of the district to see that not too great of an infringement occurs.

The district perception was that its activity benefited communities and their ability to be in charge of schooling.

All of the REAA districts were subject to the legislature's actions on school funding--the process, amount, and the timing. One superintendent remarked:

> The state doesn't issue the district office complete funding until the end of the year...the legislature whips itself. Why? Some board bought a snowgo and put it in the garage. This brought on the huge bureaucracy. This means: 1) no budget, 2) you have to develop flexible staffing plans. A good manager would build up a cash reserve of $1 million, managing the reserve for educational purposes. But the teachers' associations and the legislature hear about this and object. We have never had a carryover of more than $100,000 and this means that at the end of the year, we go on a frantic spending spree.

The condition was general to all REAA districts, but perhaps it had a greater impact on those in which there were localized schools. Legislative action on school funding forced centralization of school district financial affairs in the district offices and this affected the discretionary funding of localized schools.

Legislative contacts of localized schools were few but significant. One of the sample sites won a special legislative appropriation to construct a new school, through the intercession of its legislator (against the wishes of the district office and board). All the REAA districts had close connections to their regions' legislators and used these ties to secure capital projects funding.

For the most part, state-level pressures were mediated by the district offices of localized schools, and did not have direct impact on local schools.

Administrative Relationships of Locally Controlled Schools

The organization of the district office and relations between it and principals and teachers of localized schools was different from what we found concerning regionalized schools.

District-Level Administrative Processes

Most of the BIA schools in 1981-82 were localized ones, and they followed different rules than did the REAAs. The enabling law under which the BIA schools operated, PL 95-561, placed a floor of authority under the community's local board, and empowered it to hire and fire principals and school staff (following applicable federal recruitment regulations). The local board could delegate this power to the agency superintendent, who was the supervisor of local school operations in a nominal sense, and who connected the board to the BIA headquarters in Washington. There were then direct lines of influence between the agency superintendent and the local school. As we will point out below, the degree of superintendents' influence varied across the four BIA sample sites.

The four REAA districts (including the other five localized schools) were different from the REAA districts discussed in Chapter 5 for two reasons. None of the districts had only localized schools. In fact, two had schools of the "mixed" type of control (to be discussed in Chapter 8). But all four districts had relatively strong policies in support of localized schooling, and two of the four superintendents were strong proponents of local control ideology. One head of a large REAA district said:

> We look at the district as a confederation rather than as a centralized school district. The strength of the district comes up from the ASB rather than down from the top.

And another superintendent reiterated this bottom-up view of educational control: "The safeguard of American education is local boards in control of schools."

A second difference was administrative. Principals and principal teachers of the localized REAA schools had direct links with the district office, instead of indirect ties through an area principalship or other specialized office of local school administration. Some teachers and local administrators questioned the sincerity of district office beliefs in local control, and believed their schools were lost in a bureaucratic maze set up by the district office; but most school staff thought that the districts were not opponents of local school autonomy.

District Office Relationships with Principals

Regionalized schools were headed by transient local administrators within school districts having stability in the superintendency. In localized schools nearly the opposite was the case: BIA superintendents changed jobs and three of the four REAA superintendents left their posts within the period of one year. For the most part, local administrators did not have long tenure in their positions, but their careers at the sites were somewhat longer than superintendents on the average.

Two of the nine administrators in localized schools had personal ties with district superintendents, and were able to use them to the advantage of local school interests. Said one:

> I was there working in the central office for two years. So there are a lot of favors to be called in. I know most of the people. So I don't have to go through intermediate areas, if I want to contact someone. Also, I understand the morass of paper there.

There was also one case of hostile, antagonistic relations between a principal teacher and the district staff. However, most local administrators appeared to have neither strongly positive nor negative relationships with superintendents and district staffers. What did seem to characterize relationships was a substantial degree of autonomy. A principal teacher in interior Alaska remarked that his superintendent gave him a "wide berth." He had never been overruled, and the superintendent had not intervened. A BIA principal enjoyed a "lot of autonomy" in his relationship to the agency.

Communications between the district office and school site appeared to be somewhat more effective than those described in Chapter 5. There were a variety of modes: by phone or CB, sometimes by letter or memo, and on occasion in person. The administrator of a small BIA school in western Alaska described his contacts with the agency:

> Most of my contact...is over the radio. Sometimes it's by memo. There's a daily one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening where I stand by for any messages.... People from the agency visit here only infrequently. Maybe one of them comes up every two months. The super doesn't ever come out. But...we've had three supers during this year.

BIA administrators were more likely to have difficulty communicating with the agency than state school administrators with the district office. Maintenance concerns occupied much time in agency offices. And the isolated, small villages, where there was only one telephone, presented difficulties in the exchange of information between local school and central office. Usually, however, communications between district office or agency and local school were adequate, given environmental constraints.

Administrators of regionalized schools tended to be unclear as to their administrative responsibilities. Administrators of localized schools, however, had few complaints about their jobs, and were clear about the pattern of authority relationships. We attribute this partly to flux in the district or agency environment. Superintendents did not remain in power long enough to confuse a principal's perception of where authority lay. Partly, it was the result of superintendents' policy: One veteran chief district officer stated: "There's a lot of agreement (on the principal's role)." This superintendent proceeded to summarize the situation of authority for principals and principal teachers in localized schools:

> But the principals serve two masters--the ASB and also the superintendent and regional board. They get battered around and feel it.... Much of my relationship depends on the confidence I have in a principal's ability.

One generalization from interviews with principals of localized schools is that they are involved in a double process of interpretation. They have developed an understanding of community goals and expectations, and they take these to be their central charge. They then interpret the professional world of instructional norms and practices and the pedagogic content of school programs in terms of community expectations. Secondly, they interpret and defend this result to district office personnel including the superintendent and the regional school board, for the purpose of protecting the autonomy of their community schools.

Administration/Teaching Staff Relationships

Teachers in regionalized schools complained of district office ineptitude. The obstacle to development of effective schooling, in their view, was the district office complex. Teachers in localized schools were less critical of regional conditions affecting their classroom performance. To the extent they were dissatisfied, the object was as likely to be the principal as the district office. (Generically, service administrators tend to object most to the closest supervisor.)

After we consider the organization of teachers, we will examine areas of discontent mentioned by teachers.

Teachers Unions. BIA teachers, as federal employees, were not represented by teachers' associations. In three of four REAA districts with localized schools, however, teachers' associations were relatively strong forces in school politics, and introduced some conflict in administrative relationships with teachers (from the perspective of district office administrators). The head of one of these districts thought relations with NEA were positive: "If our teachers need anything, we will move heaven and earth to get it for them." In the second district, relations with the NEA were "tenuous." The NEA representative had the authority to visit a site on a grievance issue, and make an investigation and determination. The third district had experienced in its development a period of organized teachers' influence at the district level. The area teachers' association had supported candidates in school board elections, and board members representing the association's point of view influenced district policy in several areas, including curriculum.

Professional Training and Development. Few teachers complained that they were denied opportunities for professional growth and development, notwithstanding the fact that such opportunities were less available in rural Alaska than they would be in urban schools. REAA districts with localized schools in the sample had district-wide in-services, usually at the start of the school year, which was a major occasion for district contact with teachers. Other in-services were conducted throughout the year. An REAA superintendent in one of the districts explained his attitude toward training:

> We've sent teams of teachers to visit successful programs in other schools. We've also held in-services just to stimulate thoughts, present ideas, get people thinking about ways to improve the academic program. We're very liberal about sending teachers to conferences.

Communications with District Staff. Although teachers mentioned several opportunities for contacts with the district office, they were not unanimous concerning the value of these opportunities for influence over policy development. A typical view was that of a teacher in northern Alaska who commented that she had had no contact with the superintendent or his office; district decisions affecting her were communicated through the principal. She had formal channels to make input into regional board decisions through NEA grievance procedures. This, she said, was "the only effective way for teachers to have input."

When district staff did come, said many teachers, they "keep their plane on the ground"--staying only long enough to make an appearance and then exit.

The communication pattern these examples suggested was one of limited direct contact: when district staffers or BIA personnel visited village sites, they stayed briefly: for teachers, travel to the district or agency office was costly and time-consuming. Most communications come through channels--memorandums, letters, calls routed through principals and principal teachers.

Access and Participation. For teachers, access to district-level decisionmaking was available primarily on a formal (and thus restricted) basis. A teacher in a coastal village commented:

> The district office makes you feel that you have input but you don't really. Part of it is that they are in ____ (the district headquarters) and can't relate to our problems out here.

However, this teacher (and many others) remarked that the ASB and principal made the important decisions for the school, and most teachers had input. In our interviews with teachers, we asked about their participation and influence over a range of school functions, and this is what we tended to find:

(Question: Who has the most important influence over:....)

(School calendar?)	Teachers and the principal sit down together and the principal presents it to the ASB.
(Selecting textbooks?)	Teachers. Though we ask the principal.
(New course proposals?)	Principal and teachers, and the principal relates it to the ASB.
(Evaluating school programs?)	Overall for the school, the principal. For the classroom, the teachers.
(Planning school budget?)	This is the principal's decision. He'll ask the teachers responsible, like for the shop. _____ is real democratic.
(Student behavior?)	The principal, but all the teachers participate.

Such comments are typical of interviews with teachers in localized schools, with the exception that some respondents mentioned the ASB as often as teachers. In short, teachers in localized schools appeared to have greater access to decisionmaking processes than those in regionalized schools.

Yet there were complaints from teachers and dissatisfaction because of limited opportunities for participation. These were from a minority of teachers, and they were directed at specific individuals: principals in two of our nine sample sites and a few ASB members.

The problems differed somewhat in the two schools, but they essentially involved relations between principals, who saw their roles as masters of the school environment and brooked no opposition to their personal fiat, and members of the teaching staff who expected to be consulted concerning school operations. The disagreements were reflected in the evaluation system.

Principals' Evaluations of Teachers. In most of the localized sample sites, evaluations of teachers by principals appeared to pose no problems. However, in two schools this was the most controversial issue of the school, producing conflict between the principal and his staff. In the words of one teacher, "These antagonisms have a negative effect on the students." A second teacher discussed the evaluation system as it had affected her:

> The principal's evaluation criteria are simple. If you are male, you're doing a good job. If you are a thin, blond, "easy" female, you are doing a good job. If you are a heavy set, aggressive female, you are not doing a good job.

In this school community, personnel issues had surfaced in ASB meetings, with some ASB members taking the side of teachers and challenging the "sexist" attitudes of the principal.

The options available to teachers in these two school sites were to submit to authority or to leave, and teacher turnover at the schools appeared to be more a result of poor principal-teacher relations than of community pressures or other factors. The grievance procedure did not work, said one teacher:
"If you make your objections known to a decision, even through the grievance procedures, there will be repercussions--loss of job at the school." To repeat, a minority of teachers were in a school setting like those described. The setting resembles on the local level the personalistic, mildly authoritarian style of administration we found in districts with regionalized schools.

Community Evaluation of Teachers. In all of the localized schools, teachers were aware of the role community attitudes and perceptions played in their ability to do their jobs. A teacher from a western coastal village framed the requirements in these terms:

> If new teachers are coming here from the Outside, the biggest problem is the change in the culture that they have to live in. They are suddenly a minority, and they must fit into the lifestyle of the village here. Living conditions can also be very hard at times.
>
> The advantages are that kids are really good. The family structure is very strong. They really haven't been introduced to Western culture. They've shown that they have the ability to hang onto their culture a long time.

Approximately one half of the localized sample sites were very conservative Native communities, where the traditional culture had never lost its footing. In the remainder of the villages with localized schools, there was a process of transition from subsistence to a cash economy, and increasing acceptance of Western norms and rituals. The climate of adaptation in such communities was different, said a teacher:

> The community's attitude toward new teachers is basically a "wait-and-see" one. They cause no trouble, and are generally very helpful. The kids will test one out, but this is normal in any situation.
>
> The advantages of living and working in ____ are: Size, you can know everyone in the community, can get to know the students very well. The staff is very good, one of the best in the district. The freedom from supervision is very good, and the environment of the village is exceptional. The lifestyle is great, and you can feel good about the contribution you make to the students' lives and education.
>
> (Disadvantages?) The lack of amenities, the racism in the community; the fact that you are never made to feel that this is particularly your home.

Communities with localized schools used these aspects of their lifestyle as evaluative standards to grade teachers. But the standards were ambiguous, which created a climate of uncertainty so far as many teachers in localized schools were concerned. One teacher in a traditional community observed:

> I feel the greatest uncertainty about the subtle interactions within the community and what constitutes appropriate behavior. Something else that can be a problem is how to teach and what to teach. There's a lot of uncertainty in this area as well.

Others mentioned in different ways the "social evaluation" that was done of them by community members, with behavior and personality as the criteria.

The administrative system of localized school is different from that of regionalized schools. There appeared to be a looser coupling of school-level actors to the district office complex. But there seemed to be a far stronger coupling of actors at the local-school level. Teachers were not left out. They had greater opportunities for participation than in regionalized schools. In the process, however, the autonomy of the classroom may be affected by a subtle process involving the principal and community values. We will return to this theme.

Political Relationships in Locally Controlled Schools

The political context of localized schools involved both regional and local factors. At the regional level, turnover in agency offices and conflict on district boards created optimal conditions for local autonomy. At the local level, board processes, board-principal relations, and community participation mediated by board and principal defined the conditions of localized control.

Conflict on District School Boards

The imminent termination of BIA schools in the early 1980s created unfavorable conditions for stability in agency administration, and the result was a very high degree of turnover of superintendents. The school boards of REAA districts were unstable, leading to the ouster of superintendents in three of four districts with localized schools in our sample.

A district staffer in the first district described the conflict as an inevitable consequence of change in the region as a whole:

> The board is split between two points of view and over political allegiances. The region is in transition, and the conflicts taking place hurt everyone. Change is good in the long run, but the immediate problem is the short-term impact. The regional corporation leadership has influence on the board, and that leadership is looking for change in the district.

A superintendent in the second REAA district thought there was little basis for disagreement on his board:

> We seldom have anything but a unanimous vote. If they don't feel comfortable with something, they won't approve it. Seven of the nine members of the RSB are Yupik. It's a very good board. I would say we have no areas of disagreement on the board.

This superintendent too was a politician, and he had used care in keeping board politics low-key, and in covering all bases. However, a district staffer pointed out that "The board has backed _____ up against the wall and demanded his involvement (in program development). I think they have unfair expectations of the superintendent." Within a year, the superintendent's apparently unanimous support on the board was erased, and he left the district.

District Board/Local Board Relations

Division on the regional board was perhaps a facilitating condition in the development of strong community boards. In all of the REAA districts with localized schools, there was strong tension between representation of village schools and those of the regional capitals, where the district headquarters were located (and where the population of students was often as great as that of all village schools). We examine this center/peripheral conflict in Chapter 8.

Local board members tended to resent the "intrusion" of regional boards into local affairs. Said one local board member:

> Now we seem to have more control over what is to be done. But, with the RSB, they are making more decisions than we are. I want our own ASB to have the most control, and then we can tell the RSB what we want....

This board member said she was discouraged from running for the ASB:

> I almost didn't run for office because the RSB said that ASB members must have a kid in school. I told the super that I thought the RSB was dictating. The super said: "Just go ahead and run. You've been here a long time." So I ran and the RSB didn't try and stop me.

Conflicts were not between different types of individuals, as for example between Natives and non-Natives. Instead, differences related to the existence of two political arenas. The competition concerned allocation of resources--for example, number of personnel assigned to the district office as opposed to the schools. A board unified on the basis of a regional interest might potentially deny resources to village schools.

Local Board Processes and Institutional Development

ASBs and BIA local boards evolved from school advisory committees. However, if we view them as local political institutions, we gain a better understanding of the function they play in small, rural communities.

Board Elections. Few candidates ran for seats on PACs and CSCs in the regionalized school communities, and electoral turnout was low. This was not the situation affecting boards in most localized schools.

In two communities, there was limited competition for seats, and little electoral participation. The principal teacher explained it this way:

> Anybody can run but there's not much competition. Most of the parents here don't talk in English so it's hard to find people who will serve on the board.
>
> We don't have stipends like they do at the high school (state). So there's no incentive other than service. So at best we may have eight candidates for five seats.

This "low" rate of interest in board elections, however, was far higher than in the communities that had regionalized schools. The average localized community had opposition for every contested seat, and a relatively low rate of turnover. In the most active community (with a BIA school), there were ten candidates for the last vacant seat. (In an election to be held soon after the site visit, two seats were vacant and 19 candidates had already filed.) In this community, the local board was an extension of the IRA council, with the IRA empowering the school board to run the school. This integration of Native council with local board may have accounted for the high degree of interest in the election.

Turnout for local school board elections tended to vary by number of contested seats. In most of the localized communities, turnout was no greater than for municipal elections elsewhere in Alaska. In a few of the communities, the election attracted most villagers, especially when there was an incentive such as a movie or Bingo.

Board Meeting Attendance and Activity. In a minority of the localized communities, attendance at board meetings was low. A principal teacher in western Alaska said "The villagers don't come and I rarely have more than three at any meeting." In most of the localized schools, however, attendance at meetings depended on the issue. A principal teacher remarked "In order to get people to come to meetings, you have to have a very important reason." A principal in another village said "The board's activity really depends on the issue," with the issues drawing attendance and activity tending to be "people issues...particularly classified staff and students."

Meetings that the BIA boards have held regarding transfer from federal to state jurisdiction have drawn nearly all members of the villages. In other villages, meetings focusing on community use for events such as basketball have drawn students and younger adults who use the gym.

Regular participants at board meetings were members of the board and the local administrator, who tended to set the agenda for the meeting and played the most active role in discussion. Teachers, one board member remarked, "were usually not at meetings, which is a change from previous years." Stable participants in addition to these actors are usually older adults, both men and women, and those from other political organizations in the village--the city council or traditional/IRA council.

Board Member Socialization. Several factors explained why community residents sought seats on the board. Most related to some perception of a problem at the school, or a personal interest in expanding (or protecting) the service schools could do for community cultures. Representative comments from our interviews with board members in localized schools included these points:

> I wanted to be on it because of my basic concern. I don't want the younger generation to be ignorant like me. I don't want them to lose their culture. I want them to have the knowledge to do whatever they want. I've tried to push the education. A lot of the young people here think that if they finish high school that's enough. I've tried to tell them that it isn't so, that they need to go to college too. (ASB member)

> I don't like the system. The overall education. We are graduating some very confused students. The issue around the education of our kids is to redo the whole system, not how to speak Eskimo. Math, English. We need to redirect the methods of teaching; this is a high priority. (ASB member)

> My age group and those who will listen are the people that I talk to. My concern is that we are graduating people who are ill equipped to face either world, either the Eskimo world or the white world. Am I equipped for the world of competition if I

> move to say, New York? The answer is no. (We need to) try to put pride back into being Yupik. Have a program that would direct our children to feel more comfortable in going to the University of Alaska. I was about 13 when I thought I was going to school to learn English. (BIA board member)

There were also board members who served without an articulable reason--who were pushed into the board by friends or relatives. And there were those who appeared more interested in the power and status that could be derived from board membership than in the service they could perform, as one principal teacher stated about younger members of his ASB:

> People run for seats on the ASB on the basis of prestige in the community rather than to serve. I have to throw some ASB members out of the gym at times, when they use their position to take over someone else's time. They use their position to defy my authority.

In the process of board service local leaders developed skills in interpreting the complex world of intergovernmental processes. They gained some of this through board member training, but more often than not they learned through apprenticeship on the board. One new member remarked:

> Very gradually I'm learning. I'm learning the school situation, its rules, its bylaws. Every meeting I learn one thing and then the next meeting I learn something else. I'm like the baby of the ASB.

A BIA board member commented "I've learned some things in a hurry. Yes, I've learned. I'd like to be more involved again." And sometimes this learning was the opposite of that expected, as in the case of the northern Alaska ASB member who said she had "learned much about school operations and curriculum, most of it negative."

We found that local board members were likely to be involved in other organizations of the community and, as is the pattern nationwide, they were likely to use their experience as a springboard to office at higher levels. This process represents the development of political efficacy in transitional and traditional Native villages, and it appears to have the effect of changing influence over the schools. One BIA board member expressed the difference an active board has made in his community:

> Seven years ago everything was dictated by the teachers. Now the board has grasped some of this power. That's why I'm pushing people with more awareness to run for political seats in the community.

Local Board/Principal Relationships

Local school boards had not brought about this change by themselves. To us, the localization of control is the product of community boards and principals. In the localized sample sites we visited, we consistently saw local administrators associated in the enterprise of developing community efficacy. Some did so poorly, as for example the principal teacher who locked the community out of the school after 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon until the following morning, and the principal whose authoritarian and sexist style alienated part of the community (and the school staff). But most of the principals in localized schools had developed effective working relationships with boards, characterized by openness, support for local cultural values in the schools, and a laid-back, non-aggressive and apolitical style of school management. This style led to their acceptance by the community and its trust in them.

Communication. Most principals were in regular, daily contact with board members and community adults. They talked about general school matters and about issues that had been left hanging at meetings. This interest in the community and school was reciprocated by board members. As one ASB member put it:

> There are no conflicts between the principal and the school board. Both have ears and they use their ears to listen.

It might seem difficult for local administrators to avoid contact with village residents, given the small size and sparse population of the average rural location. But our interviews in regions throughout the state indicated that some local administrators (and teachers) thought their work was a 9 to 5 job, from which they could remove themselves at the close of the school day.

Respect for Local Values. There was strong support on the part of most principals and principal teachers for the wishes of parents and community members, and particularly for the culture of the village and region. In the opinion of these principals, board influence "should be total over the cultural heritage program" in the schools. In one case, the principal teacher was the prime agent in the community and region for instruction in aspects of local Native culture, saying "If I don't teach them how to make snow shoes and sleds, who will?"

Non-Aggressive Behavior. Principals and principal teachers in localized communities spurned opportunities for involvement and influence in major community decisions. The BIA schools in our sample were undergoing negotiation processes at the time of field research. However, principals of BIA schools appeared to scrupulously avoid influencing decisions in this area, notwithstanding many chances to exert informal influence. One principal stated his beliefs about direction of community activity in these terms:

> I only go to community meetings when I'm invited. I do that not because I'm not interested but because I think that my presence is sometimes intimidating.

A teacher characterized the style of the principal in her school as one where "things are always being done with an eye to not offending the community." Finally the principal of a BIA school in which there was a strong IRA influence admitted to a very limited degree of contact with community leaders (Native corporation and church) for a specific reason. He did not want the people to rely on him for decisions that they should be able to make. While he was regularly invited to attend meetings of the IRA council, he stayed at these meeting only when school business was at issue.

An Apolitical Role. In regionalized schools, we noted one case of a principal who had run for and obtained political office in the village. In rural Alaska generally, school personnel have often played roles of political leadership in small villages. We found, however, that none of the principals and principal teachers in the localized schools had comtemplated running for office in villages if such opportunities were available (where there were second-class cities, as was the case in five of the nine localized sites). The local administrator of a BIA school on the coast advised newcomers: "Stay out of village politics. That's the quickest ticket out of here."

A final attribute of effective principal-board relationships in localized communities was the ability to be accepted in the community and inspire trust. The principal teacher of a road system school discussed his relationships with the board in terms of its trust for him:

> The board is not apathetic. Three board members are more vocal than average Natives. If bothered by something, they would say it. They are not overwhelmed by the principal. They would go to ______ (district office) if they had any conflict with me. But the board is very united and unanimous when it makes decisions....
>
> But it is very likely that the board would support my decision. The ASB expects from the school good decisions. If I introduced astronomy in the curriculum, they would think I had a good reason to do this. The community relies on my judgment--there is no conflict. My track record is very important, and because of it I have 100 percent community support. There is no reason at all for them to distrust me.

Indeed, interviews in the community demonstrated that this principal teacher's high opinion of his service was not inflated. Some community adults were not pleased with the paternalistic attitude of the local administrator, but they supported him strongly.

Local Boards and Community Participation in Education

Parents of children in localized schools appeared to be slightly more involved in school events than those of regionalized schools. Electoral participation was higher, as noted. In a few communities, residents remarked that there was more activity at the school than there had been in years previously. One ASB member commented that nearly everyone in the village had attended a school play and dinner, and in other communities potlatches in the school, music and dance shows, and the like had drawn a large measure of parent involvement. But these were events reflecting poorly on the development of political sophistication in small villages.

The chief respect in which lay boards of localized schools differed from those in other types of schools was as mouthpieces for their communities: they translated parents' wishes and demands, and presented them to principals and teachers. In the process, they may have a marginal impact on the development of political skills of community adults.

Many middle-aged and older Natives in western and northern Alaska do not speak English well, and board members played an important service in translating their wishes from Inupiat or Yupik into English. In the process, some information was transmitted to community adults about the school system. A BIA board member commented:

> People here have a hard time understanding how the board and the school work. We have to talk about it a lot.

A principal in a different community mentioned, "School is still an awesome place to many of the people in the village," and it was easier for villagers to bring their problems to the board (or to a Native aide working at the school) than to a teacher or principal.

Several board members spoke of the way in which they attempted to represent community views. There was frequent and familiar use of slogans such as "doing this in a democratic way," and trying "to represent their views on the board." But there were many comments suggesting that board members, like principals in localized schools, were facilitators more than enactors. An influential ASB member had this to say about her role.

> They do come to me, especially those who don't speak very good English. They will come to me and ask me. I usually ask them to go see the administrator, and they say, "Come with me" and I say, "I'll just stand there and not say anything." And sometimes they ask me to bring things up at meetings without naming the names.
>
> (Topics?) A lot of them have to do with children who have problems with their teachers. I tell them to go see the teachers, that the ASB is not involved here. Or their kids don't like a kind of food, or someone hit the kid. I make a note and call the teacher and say, "So and so came to me. Did they come

> to see you?" Then at the meeting I'll bring it up, but not say who was involved....

This type of representation and translation of community interests in the school is perhaps not very typical of urban school board activity, but it seems to represent much of the activity of board members in localized schools. There were also the typical roles of actual and virtual representation. For example, a member of a northern Alaska ASB found herself acting as a delegate if she determined that community input was valid, but more often than not she was a trustee for the community. The difficulty for her was knowing what the community expected of her or understanding it if they made it clear.

The local school board or ASB is a westernized institution of local government, and its use in Alaska rural communities seems to indicate some assimulation to an organizational type. It would appear to be effective on the basis of our observation from field research. In only one localized community did we find evidence that attempts to influence important school processes such as personnel selection and retention had circumvented the local board. A teacher in the village school recounted the case for us:

> My first year here there was a power struggle between the principal and the council members. They tried to force the principal to resign. The principal misunderstood that the city council wanted him to attend one of their meetings. He was getting ready for bed. And when someone came to get him, he said that he wanted to go to bed. The council misunderstood his action. They thought he was refusing to see them. Then other parents in the village came forward, and said to the council members, "Lay off the principal. This is really silly." The whole thing was also tied in with the use of the gym. Some council members felt like he wasn't making the gym available enough to the community. This was later straightened out. The principal was not asked to resign.

Apparently, in this situation, the ASB had not been effective in addressing a school-related issue of concern to the community. But the issue was not resolved through the mobilization of opinion, rumor campaigns, or other indirect means of influence. Instead, community residents used a parallel local government organization as an arena in which to discuss and resolve the issue. This suggests that in this community and perhaps in others (especially those with IRA councils) there has developed an organizational capacity to respond.

School Governance Processes in Localized Schools

When we surveyed principals and principal teachers in 1981, we did not find a strongly positive association between perceptions of localization of influence and localization of important school operations (such as curriculum). Visits to the nine sample sites showed why: there was no single definition of what local responsiveness meant. Our description of the rural Alaska setting pointed out more diversity than unity with respect to natural resources, Native cultures, degrees of contact with western society, strength of subsistence lifestyles. This diversity was reflected in school government processes.

Responsiveness of Localized Schools

The answer to the question "responsive to what?" varied from community to community. The dichotomy presented by many of our respondents--responsive to Native culture or to western academic practice--is an understandable way to phrase the issues and concepts, if we keep in mind that it is relatively superficial. Also to be remembered is that there was not unanimous and constant agreement on objectives in each rural community. Some communities had reached a state of consensus on educational goals, and had agreed on the way to attain these goals through the staff and curriculum. The more typical pattern, however, was for objectives to conflict with goals, for minority dissent from a majority view, or pluralism regarding community viewpoints, associated with factional power struggles and changes in the community. Moreover, a common pattern in Native communities in Alaska is that views of individuals, particularly elders, are not articulated or explicit.

With these caveats in mind, we present information from our respondents on localization of staff, curriculum, finance, calendar, and other aspects of school operations.

Staffing

In all nine localized sites, local actors played roles of importance in staffing the school. However, there were varying degrees of influence by district staff and superintendents over recruitment, particularly of principal teachers and teachers.

Regional Office Involvement. The local hiring system was connected to the regional agency or district office in all cases, but there were differences between BIA and REAA systems. The BIA system permitted the greatest amount of local influence. Under PL 95-561, local boards obtained authority to hire and fire principals, teachers, and support staff (but federal hiring guidelines had to be followed). Prior to this, the agency superintendent was the authority of last resort in all employment matters. With the 1978 changes in law, the agency superintendent's authority became advisory, unless the village gave him the authority to hire. The superintendency acted as a clearing house--collecting data and applications, screening them, and sending them to the villages. Authority to act further had to be transferred to the superintendent through a resolution of the BIA school board. The formal process for hiring now involves advertising from the agency office, and candidates' completion of standard federal 171 employment forms. BIA rules accord preference to Natives, veterans, and others, which presented few opportunities to the boards in our sample sites because of the small pool of Natives available for rural teaching or administrative positions.

Two of the four REAA districts with localized schools had developed staff selection committees for principal and teacher hiring. These committees customarily included a central office representative (usually the assistant superintendent), the local principal, teachers, board members, and other community adults. Although the regional board was the final authority for all school district hiring, it had delegated power to the committee, and the committee tended to defer to members from villages for which staff were hired. In all cases, localized hiring was supported by the superintendent and district office, and was mentioned in district policy.

Principal Hiring/Retention. In about half of the sample sites, district offices retained most influence over selection of the school principal. In two BIA sites, this area of responsibility was delegated to the agency, which made a selection and sent it to the local school board for its approval. Superintendents and district staffs in two REAAs also wielded most influence over the selection of principals.

However, in other sites, communities made the effective decision. An ASB member of an interior Alaska community described how the principal teacher was hired:

> The whole village decided on the hiring.... The superintendent talked to parents. They had a chance to learn about the three or four applicants.... Most people knew ____ (the new principal teacher) and he had been in the area awhile.

An ASB member in western Alaska commented on how the current principal teacher was selected:

> The ASB does get its choice. A woman wanted to be principal too, but they chose _____ (the male principal teacher). They wanted him to be our principal, and the district hired him.

In one BIA site, the local board sought for the principalship an individual who had taught there previously.

Influence of boards over the retention of local administrators was informal, largely because of the due process rights of school personnel and specifications of negotiated contracts. Nevertheless, in most of the localized communities we visited, there was board and community monitoring of performance. One board member described how his board became involved:

> The only time it (evaluation of the principal) came to our attention was when we learned from other teachers or the parents that they are not doing their job right. Then we intervene. We have a meeting and try to come up with a solution. We can make recommendations that the principal teacher be removed. We're demanding now, we're trying to determine who will be vice-principal.

In districts with localized schools, district staff were often apprehensive about local board power. Said an assistant superintendent:

> They have more freedom in deciding on retention than I would like to see. You get into all sorts of things--illegal meetings, executive sessions where individuals are not confronted directly. This sort of thing should not be condoned.

Teacher Hiring. Principals were as influential as boards in the teacher hiring process of localized schools. Principals of BIA schools were primary hiring agents. One principal described his involvement as follows:

> I do get involved in it. When I know who the candidates are, I'll call them up because I have to live with these people. I spend my own dime on this. I explain to them how it is out here in _____. What they need to bring with them and that sort of thing.... I'll call them up and talk to them and see which one sounds the best.

Other BIA principals reported similar processes--telephone interviews, recommendation of one candidate to the boards and general agreement by the school board. (Federal budgetary constraints made it impossible to bring candidates for teacher positions to the site.)

In the REAA districts, there tended to be greater local influence over teacher hiring. Two of the REAA districts used a teacher screening guide (the SRI teacher perceiver), because, said one principal, "it adds the element of consistency when you have many different people interviewing potential candidates." In most of the REAA, local boards could blackball appointments of instructors to the school staff.

Over 90 percent of school administrators and teachers in rural Alaska are Caucasians, and the concerns expressed in local interviewing related to the applicant's suitability for life in the community. In some cases, questions concerned the applicant's marital situation, religious affiliation, interest, hobbies, and habits--such as drinking. Said one local administrator about interviews with potential candidates for teaching jobs:

> It's a Moravian village and therefore they have to be careful about booze, that booze is out for people who teach here.

In other cases, respondents noted that they wanted to get a sense of the applicant's ability to live in an isolated rural area and interest in teaching Native children. Several board members remarked that they sought teachers who would not try "to change our village."

Paraprofessionals and Support Staff. The school is an important source of income in rural Alaska communities, and there is an economic interest in school jobs. All but a tiny minority of rural Natives lack qualifications to assume posts as teachers or principals in schools, and thus community pressure focuses on hiring of classroom teachers' aides, school secretaries, cooks, maintenance and custodial personnel. The hiring and use of paraprofessionals and support staff tended to be different in localized schools from what they were in regionalized and other types of schools.

The strongest board influence over hiring was in recruitment of classroom paraprofessionals. Applicants for these positions were residents of the school community, and their recruitment was a very sensitive matter in small communities where all might be kin. Local boards had to select among competing relatives in many cases. Some of the criteria board members mentioned were that paraprofessionals should be fair to all children in the schools and not favor their own children or close relatives, and that they should reliably report for work. The same considerations applied to the hiring of custodial personnel and secretaries of the school. A coastal school administrator commented on the hiring process for paraprofessionals and support staff:

> The ASB has a tremendous amount of responsibility and power. They won't interview the candidates. Even the paper review doesn't mean much. What is important is who needs a job, who's reliable, who stays away from the bottle, although alcohol is not a problem in this village.

Table 8 drawn from principal survey data compares localized schools to all other rural schools, with respect to the number of long-term resident paraprofessionals:

Table 8. Classroom Paraprofessionals in Localized Schools

Number of Aides (long-term resident)	Localized	Other
0	14.0	43.0
1-3	40.0	34.0
4-6	34.0	15.0
7-9	7.0	5.0
over 9	5.0	3.0

N=292 $P < 0.0016$

This table shows a strong relationship between type of school and the presence of local paraprofessionals.

In localized schools, paraprofessionals tended to play a proactive role in the classroom. They were translators and interpreters, and teachers who took concepts and ideas and found local parallels for them. Parent involvement in the classroom was also somewhat greater in localized schools than in other rural schools. Parents and community adults were learning resources: as skilled artisans they explained the construction of subsistence equipment and local crafts; as local historians they explained the evolution and development of the community, its names, and natural phenomena.

Curriculum

Perhaps no issue in rural Alaska schools is more controversial than what should be taught there. Under the centralized state and federal systems of the 1950s and 1960s, Native leaders and parents complained about the irrelevance of the school curriculum to village life and Native cultural values. With the decentralization of education in 1976, new REAA boards (and BIA schools) had the opportunity to design curricular programs relevant to local needs.

In school districts having mostly regionalized schools, the issue of cultural and social relevance to the curriculum was either ignored or postponed. In other REAA districts, district office personnel and school boards tackled the issue, but after six years it remained a problem. Said one district staffer about his board's actions:

> There is a lot of emotional commitment to the bilingual/bicultural program. But there's no agreement on the school board on what should be done. The board has not been able to come to grips with it. It's a terrible issue for them. They can't come up with a philosophy.

Reaching agreement on objectives was only part of the difficulty. There were few university trained Native language and culture instructors in the state's pool of teachers, and before 1976, there were no tested packages of instructional materials to use in schools. In establishing the REAAs, regional resource centers were also set up. Coordination of these developing centers with school district curriculum development activities was a problem from the start, as was the staffing and financing of the centers. Thus, the development of culturally relevant programs got off to a bad start, and rural school districts had to assume responsibilities for which they were not prepared.

Agency/District Office Programs. BIA schools in rural Alaska have available to them packages of curricular materials, prepared and distributed to schools from the Juneau agency office, and several REAA school districts have developed district-wide curricula in Native culture areas. The northern Alaska school system developed a district-wide language curriculum. This district required two instructional units of Inupiat, and allowed individual schools to choose between English and Inupiat language offerings for an additional unit. A second district contracted with a Yupik language development center to develop materials for a PET (Primary Eskimo Teaching) program. In both districts, however, the questions of whether to have a district-wide Native language curriculum, and how to complement it, were controversial. Said the superintendent of one district:

> The regional board has been reviewing its philosophical basis. They have gone philosophically from being most concerned about saving the culture to a position of "You teach the English, and we'll teach the Yupik."

Time in Localized Courses. One might expect that localized schools, particularly those with a wholly Native student body, would emphasize only Native languages, traditions, arts, crafts, and subsistence activities. Indeed, the localized schools were more likely to offer these topic sequences and courses than any other type of school in rural Alaska. And educators in localized schools thought they were important.

In our resurvey of educators in 1983, we asked what areas of the school curriculum they though were important, given the nature of the community in which they taught. We found significant differences between educators of localized school communities and all other schools in rural Alaska.

Table 9. Educators' Perceptions of Important Curricular Areas (Localized)

Program Area	Localized	All Other	
College preparation courses	67.9	69.1	(P 0.79)
Technical training	79.0	74.1	(P 0.79)
Bilingual education	60.5	31.5	(P 0.0000)
Local history/culture	75.3	53.4	(P 0.0031)
Native arts/crafts	70.4	42.3	(P 0.0000)
Basic academic courses	92.6	92.3	(P 0.62)

N=405

The standard academic curriculum was no less important to educators in localized schools than to educators elsewhere in rural Alaska. But locally relevant programs were considerably more important. But students in localized schools were somewhat more likely to spend time in standard academic courses than were students of all other rural schools (as reported by local administrators in 1981).

Table 10. Student Time in Academic Courses*

% of Time	Localized	Other
0 - 32 %	12.0	23.0
33 - 65 %	40.0	42.0
66 -100 %	48.0	35.0

$P < 0.0411$

*The question read: what percent of the school day does the average student spend on academic courses (e.g., English, math, science, social studies).

Localized schools did not have a completely Native curriculum and they did not necessarily emphasize Native subjects to the exclusion of academic courses. They did devote more attention to curricular concerns. These were frequent topics of discussion at board meetings, and members had a good understanding of what course work their children were taking at school.

Native Languages. Most localized schools had courses in the area's Native language. (Sixty-five percent of the principals of localized schools reported that their schools had Native language programs--as separate courses or topics--as compared to 51 percent of principals in other schools.) In western Alaska, instruction was conducted in Yupik Eskimo up through the third grade in most schools, and classroom paraprofessionals were involved in the translation of English concepts and usages into Yupik in the higher grades. In Inupiat Eskimo areas, programs had been developed in Inupiat, but the catalyst for development was the district school board and administration. The sample sites we visited in this region were not in agreement with this policy. The ASBs had requested that there be an emphasis on English and math to prepare students for college. (There is a lower rate of retention of Inupiat than Yupik Eskimo, and Inupiat children are far less likely to be monolingual in their Native language.) In road system, interior, and southeast regions, localized schools taught no Native language at all. Parents of students in one of these schools had wanted an instructor of Athabascan; but there was no teacher available and, in the words of a district official, "there't no language use there on a daily basis."

Native Culture. All localized schools had courses in areas of Native culture, including beadwork, ivory carving, sled and snow shoe making, and skin sewing among other subjects. In several schools there were vocational education courses that related to the subsistence activity of the vicinity or region. There were also courses in arctic survival in the schools of northern and western Alaska.

With the exception of one district having localized schools, the cultural heritage programs were not integrated into academic programs of study. The exception refers to a rural district that hired staff to integrate Native cultural materials into all course areas, including science.

Standard Academic Programs. In none of the localized schools were basic academic skills deemphasized in order to focus solely on Native culture and language programs. As several board members put it, the dichotomy was a false one, for whether students continued to live in the village or migrated to other villages or cities, they would have to possess these abilities. One of the localized schools was an extreme case in this respect. It was the only road system community among the localized schools, and its population had largely assimilated to western culture and society. The school principal had strident views on the contradiction between individual and community goals for village youth:

> We have no bilingual program other than the Aurora project. This fits the community and the kids. One hundred percent (of community adults) speak English all the time. Only a few understand a few words of Athabascan. They are not bilingual oriented. I wished they had an interest.... We have no time and no facilities to do Native things. And the community has only a superficial desire for bilingual stuff.... It is more important

> to teach kids to survive in a white man's world. You can't do both academic work and Native culture. Few kids will live in _____ the rest of their lives, sitting cross-legged. We need a back-to-basics program here.

This is a bald statement of the need for assimilation of Native youth, and few Native leaders in Alaska presently would agree with it. Yet members of the school board in this case, while remarking that a program in Native language and culture would be a valuable addition to the school program, clearly did not want it as a substitute for instruction in the basic skills at which the principal teacher excelled. One board member commented:

> We want the basic 3 Rs, the basics. They are more important than Athabascan. All must make a living in the world and they need English. I hate to admit that our language shouldn't be No. 1.

The way in which this case was different from those of regionalized schools lay in the extent to which the process of assimilation was controlled or directed. Community adults knew of the teacher's desire that school children "mainstream" and agreed with it; furthermore, they felt that they were in a position to affect the way in which their children would enter the high technology world of the late 20th century.

We noted reversals in direction of curricular programs in three of the nine field sites. In a REAA school on the coast, the principal teacher discussed the new emphasis on reading in his school:

> We have decided, along with the ASB, that reading is the number one priority. _____ will be teaching five periods of language laboratory next year. All the students will go through the program.

In two BIA schools, there was also a change in emphasis, with greater attention being given to reading and English. Said the principal of one school:

> The board decided a back-to-basics approach was necessary, and as a result we developed a B.A.S.I.L. program.

The principal teacher of a coastal BIA school explained why his school would emphasize English in the very traditional Yupik-speaking region:

> We've got 6th and 7th graders who aren't good in English, but our 8th graders who didn't go through the PET program are much better English speakers. I presented it to the board. They said, "Fine, let's try it." So we will not have Yupik as the primary language in K-3 next year.

In the absence of information on the history of program development in these schools or longitudinal study, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of curricular change. However, it would appear from our field work that more change (if not innovation) is associated with the localization of control than with regionalization.

Finance

Agency or school district policy set broad financial parameters for the funding of localized schools, but we did note a degree of fiscal autonomy.

BIA schools had limited fiscal discretion, said one principal:

> I sit down with the school board and go through the budget. I'm allocated so much money and it's based on a formula of how the money should be spent. So when we go through the budget it's really a paper exercise. The only discretionary money that we have is what's left over after salaries. We may decide to use that for travel, for wrestling, or testing an evaluation service, or on food, whatever the board decides.

In the REAA districts with a large number of localized schools, the budgetary process was more complex, involving superintendent and district staff, principals, and local boards. The process in one district worked this way:

> Principals put together a rough budget in consultation with teachers and the ASBs, and submit this to the district as a request. The district figures the necessary adjustments to be made to this request, then puts together a rough budget for the entire district. This is reported to the RSB. The board breaks into teams and travels throughout the district holding budget hearings at each village site. Community input is incorporated into this rough budget by the RSB.... Sites are given lump sum appropriations.

These processes left both BIA and REAA localized schools a small amount of money for unrestricted local uses. Depending on the district's policy and the aggressiveness of the local board, special state and federal program funds were sought to supplement these amounts. In the localized schools, JOM and Indian Education monies were directed to the local school. Educational program committees, which usually overlapped with the local board or ASB, were responsible for the distribution of these funds. In one school, for example, JOM monies were used to buy supplies for Native crafts courses and to fund travel of Native dance troupes. Indian education monies paid for the salaries of classroom paraprofessionals who assisted students with language difficulties.

School Calendar

All localized schools followed legal requirements related to the length of the school year (180 days), and most had starting days in common with other schools in the district, based on district policy. Influence of BIA school boards and administrators on the calendar was limited by the federal requirement that the school take 17 vacation days during the school year. A principal teacher complained about the effects of this rule on his community:

> This year we won't get out of school until June 3rd. Washington, D.C. doesn't know that the river breaks up and everybody leaves. There probably won't be but three or four kids left in school on June 3rd.

In the REAA districts, there was more flexibility. One REAA localized school began in late August and finished by mid-May. The rationale of this calendar, which left no Christmas vacation, was the climate:

> Weather is so cold in the winter, and there is nothing else to do...in the village.... Subsistence is not important; there is very little subsistence hunting and fishing involving children.

Community adults and ASB members agreed with the schedule, and also moved to have the school day begin later in the winter mornings when there was little light.

Religious holidays were an equally important framework on which localized school calendars were constructed. Said one principal:

> I'll do up a suggested calendar and submit it to them (the ASB). Then they approve it or change it, whatever is necessary.... Church holidays are very important in making out the calendar. The village is Catholic.

In traditional, coastal areas of northwest and western Alaska, the school board set the calendar paying attention to the end of fishing season in the fall, when school should begin, and the start of fish and whaling camp in May, when school should end. Board members felt these subsistence activities were as educational as school activities and developed the academic schedule accordingly.

In two cases, the most important determination in setting the calendar was staff input, including that of classroom paraprofessionals. In these sites, the school tried to take economic and subsistence aspects into consideration, but the focus was usually on spring (and student "antsyness") rather than on the fall and subsistence concerns.

School Facilities Construction

Construction of school facilities is a multi-million dollar business in rural Alaska. (Construction of 92 "Hootch" schools had cost $133 million by 1983). Through the creation of construction jobs, money may be brought into local economies that have few full-time jobs. All school communities and districts in rural Alaska have been concerned with this aspect of school construction, and in the districts with localized schools there was a strong attempt to insure local hire. One district required that 20 percent of construction jobs be hired from the community; a second insisted that contractors employ Native construction firms of the region in school remodeling and building. But in none of the localized school communities was there satisfaction with the degree of local involvement in this aspect of school planning. (The fact that few Natives were members of labor unions was mentioned most frequently by district personnel when questioned about local hire.)

Local communities were also concerned with the design of school facilities--whether they would be appropriate for use by school children and communities. Interviews with school staffs and community residents showed satisfaction with local influence over this area. In an interior community, the ASB designed a new addition to the school. Said one member:

> (We) decided on a mini-gym.... The ASB got together and...we got ideas from people and drew up policy and presented it to the people. We planned small classrooms in the multi-purpose room.

Design of a new school building in northern Alaska had substantial local ASB involvement. One of our respondents in that village described at length the trips he made to Anchorage and the regional center to approve designs and use of space within the building. A BIA school board member in western Alaska complained about the lack of local influence over facilities design, and then said:

> Last year after a fire destroyed one building, and the agency attempted to relocate it (because the school building was on state, not federal land), the local board disputed the move and won. The building was rebuilt at its old location.

In a second northern Alaska village, the design for a new building was chosen by the ASB, and it incorporated a novel heating system, with a wood-fired boiler. However, in this case the local "choice" might have negative long-term effects, in that the supply of firewood close to the village was small, and seemed likely to be depleted once the new heating system was operational.

In short, construction of new schools and remodeling of old was influenced by local boards to a far greater extent in localized than in regionalized schools.

Community Use of School Facilities

In our survey of principal teachers, we found a high rate of use of school facilities by the communities throughout the state. Classrooms were used for meeting rooms after the school day ended, and for adult education classes. School piped water and showers were often the only such facilities in the village, and a small number of schools sold power to villages. These were relatively non-controversial aspects of school-community relations.

Community use of multi-purpose rooms and gyms, however, appeared to be a controversial topic in most communities. In a minority of cases, local boards determined priorities for use. In most cases, however, the local administrator decided which groups, if any, could use the facilities, and for how long. Three of our sample sites had been unable to resolve this issue to the satisfaction of user groups, embroiling school administration and board in the local politics of basketball.

This review of several process areas of governance shows strong local board or ASB involvement, particularly over staffing and curriculum programming. It indicates, too, the continuing impact of district policy on operations in localized schools. Especially in the areas of personnel selection, curriculum, and finance, the ability of a local community to exercise influence is dependent on favorable policy decisions made by the district office and board. As our cases illustrate, however, the existence of a district policy promoting localization of control does not immediately bring it into effect. Local factors may intrude on the implementation of district policy, such as conflicts surrounding the style of the local administrator, or opposition of the teaching staff to community goals. External factors are even more likely to constrain localization--for example, state graduation and certification requirements, and state and federal budgetary rules.

Climate of Expectations in Localized Schools

The discussion of regionalized schools pointed out the broad differences across types in the perceptions of school principals, regarding college attendance, school achievement, and reading proficiency of students. Here we report on these factors as far as localized schools are concerned.

College Attendance

There were significant differences between principals of localized schools and those of other rural schools, with respect to expectations regarding high school graduation. Some 45 percent of administrators in localized schools expected most (90 percent or more) of their students to graduate from high school, compared to 57 percent of administrators at other rural schools ($P < 0.0535$). There were also strong differences regarding students' likelihood of matriculation at college.

Table 11. Principals' Expectations of College Attendance (Localized)

% of Principals Who Expect	Localized		Other
70% or more	16.0		21.0
30-69%	21.0		32.0
less than 30%	63.0		46.0
	N=292	$P < 0.0058$	

Administrators of localized schools were not likely to expect students to attend college. We controlled for Native ethnicity and school size, which tended to reduce or erase the statistical significance of the relationship. For example, among Native majority schools, the control type was not significantly associated with attitudes toward college attendance. Among small schools, however, the relationship remained. Teachers and parents we visited in localized school systems were also inclined to feel that college education, particularly completion of a four-year academic program, might not be an appropriate goal for most village youth.

A small number of board members (and probably a larger number of school staff) disagreed with this attitude set. For example:

> I have talked about graduation this year. That I want graduating seniors...to go on for higher education. The principal is pushing for this. The ASB agrees with the principal. They want the students very much to attend higher education or vocational education.

He went on to explain the difficulty in interesting students in college:

> Native families are different from white families. In Native families, the children must go to their families. If their family doesn't approve, then the children can't go to college.

Academic Achievement

There were significant differences between the perceptions of administrators and teachers in localized schools and those in other rural schools with respect to the climate of instruction and conditions of academic achievement. Illustrative are responses to our question on the achievement level that could be expected of students in the school.

Table 12. Principals' and Teachers' Expectations of Student Achievement (Localized)

	Localized		Other	
	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers
Much above/above national norms	19.4	20.6	39.7	29.9
At national norms	37.3	23.8	25.0	33.1
Below/much below national norms	43.3	55.6	35.3	37.0

Principals N=257 $P < 0.0184$ Teachers N=290 $P < 0.0223$

Nearly half of the educators thought students in their schools were below the national norm, and only one-fifth felt that students were above the norm. This contrasts sharply with the pattern of responses from educators in other rural schools, and particularly with those in regionalized schools (as noted in Chapter 5). However, this apparently strong relationship between localization of control and school climate of expectations was spurious. When we controlled for ethnicity we found no significant relationships. This was the case for all our perceptual indicators of academic achievement except the variable on school reputation. In this case, the relationship between localization and perception of school reputation held for educators from schools that were ethnically mixed. They were far less likely to evaluate the school's reputation positively than were educators of other schools.

In our field visits to localized sites, we gained information on achievement levels of school youth. Said an assistant superintendent:

> There is a concern at the local level among teachers, parents, ASBs about the level of achievement.... One of the board members said to me after he saw our CTBS scores that he couldn't sleep the night after he saw them. I'd say that we are all very concerned.

The CTBS and other standard testing series are criticized because the questions to Native students are "completely outside their experience." A principal teacher in western Alaska indicated what these test scores had done to his expectations:

> You have to be realistic. To expect our students to score as well as Outsiders is ludicrous. Kids speak English only to us. We're not going to mess with this (dominance of Yupik speaking). I came in with an open mind, and I've learned a lot.

Localized School Outcomes

We collected the same set of outcome measures for localized schools that we considered in the description of regionalized schools.

Test Scores

We were able to collect test scores for six of the nine localized schools, and attempted to draw general inferences from them. Discussions on student achievement indicated satisfaction in only one of the schools (where students scored at the top of the district). In the other schools, students tended to score from two to four grade levels below the norm.

Student Adaptation and Retention

The discussion of regionalized schools reported that their dropout and vandalism rates were lower than localized and other types of schools. Twenty-three percent of localized schools reported dropouts during the 1981-82 academic year compared to 20.9 percent of the regionalized schools. And 23 percent of localized schools reported some vandalism to school property as compared to 16 percent of the regionalized schools. However, in both cases, localized schools fared better than unified and mixed schools.

Analysis of dropout measures and vandalism data from the principal survey and state DOE records indicated such a low degree of variance in instances that further statistical comparisons would not have been very meaningful. However, there was variance in absenteeism rates, as indicated below:

Table 13. Absenteeism in Localized Schools

Percentage	Localized		Other
0	37.0		13.0
1-3	11.0		5.0
4-6	19.0		30.0
7-9	16.0		29.0
10-13	15.0		24.0
	N=292	$P < 0.0066$	

These lower rates of absenteeism may reflect on the positive atmosphere of localized schools. We noted this through brief observations of classrooms in field site visits, and teachers in six of the nine schools commented at length on the favorable attitudes students had toward the school. Several pointed to the fact that students were reluctant to leave at the end of the school day. In over 100 interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents of localized school communities, we counted only three references to behavior problems.

Parent and Community Satisfaction

The final outcome measure we will use is perceptions of community adults regarding school actors and programs. Table 14 shows evaluations of our sample of convenience in localized schools regarding the five school actors.

Table 14. Community Attitudes Toward School Actors (Localized)

School Actor	% agree	% disagree
Local Board or ASB		
...is doing a good job	34.9	11.1
...does what most parents want	43.8	20.3
...tries to do something about problems in the school	73.4	3.1
Talk to local board members often (once a month)	39.1	17.2
Principal		
...is doing a good job	65.6	1.6
...keeps people informed about the school	85.9	4.7
...does what most parents want	43.3	10.9
...tries to do something about problems in the school	87.5	0.0
Talk to principal often (once a month or more)	61.9	12.7
Teachers		
...are doing a good job	53.1	6.3
...are very concerned about children	59.4	3.1
...try to do something about problems in the school	84.0	1.6
Talk to teachers often (once a month or more)	54.7	12.5
Teachers take a part in community activities	58.7	19.0
...Visit teachers in their homes often (once a month/more)	18.8	28.1
Teachers visit my home often (once a month/more)	17.4	30.2
District Board		
...tries to help local board	33.3	12.1
...does what most parents want	25.0	21.9
Talk to regional board member often (once a month or more)	25.8	48.4
...tries to do something about problems	31.3	12.5
Superintendent		
...helps local board	42.1	12.3
...keeps region informed about local school problems	50.9	19.3
...does what most parents want	19.3	14.0
...tries to do something about problems in the school	35.1	3.5
Talk to superintendent often (once a month/more)	7.3	72.7

N=63

Comparing these data with responses of residents in regionalized communities (Table 5), we note three large areas of difference in evaluation. Residents of localized school communities are far more likely to feel the principal keeps them informed than in the case of residents of regionalized schools. Second, residents of localized school communities have higher opinions of teachers, than is the norm for rural schools. They feel teachers "try to do something to help" when there are problems, and they are more likely to take part in community activities. Third, localized community residents have lower opinions of the activity of district boards. They think district boards are less concerned with their schools, less helpful, and less inclined to follow parents' wishes. There are no significant differences between types in perceptions of local boards.

We also have information on community perceptions with respect to subject areas taught in the school system, data that compare respondents from localized school communities to all other respondents.

Table 15. Community Perceptions of School Programs (Localized)

Subject Area	Good	Not Very Good
Teaching of math	53.1	7.8
Teaching of reading	54.7	4.7
Teaching of Native culture and language	50.0	14.0
Training children for lives in community	54.0	9.5
Training children for lives outside community	32.8	4.7

Although evaluations of math teaching do not differ from rates in other school types, evaluations of reading are more positive. Second and obviously, parents with children in localized schools--where Native language and culture are far more likely to be taught--are happy with these programs. Third, there were also more positive attitudes toward preparation school children get for adulthood inside and outside the community.

The final measure reviewed general satisfaction and dissatisfactions of residents with school and school/community conditions.

Table 16. Community Perceptions of School and Community Conditions (Localized)

Community Perception of...	% agree	% disagree
School calendar and schedule fit local needs	65.6	7.8
School is used for local activities	51.6	12.5
School has a good program in Native language and culture	57.8	28.1
Academic program is good	52.0	4.7
Teachers try to help the school and community	71.9	7.8
Parents support school and take part in school activities	37.5	18.8
Principal/superintendent help meet local goals	50.0	6.3
School board helps to meet local goals	60.9	10.9
Students try hard to do their best in school	54.7	18.8

Comparing these opinions with responses of residents in all other rural schools, we note several differences. As expected, residents of localized school communities evaluated Native language and culture programs more positively. What surprised us was that they were also much more likely to think the "academic program is good" than were residents of other rural schools. Without more rigorous study, this opinion is only a suggestion: perhaps the existence of programs related to community language and culture has inculcated support for the standard academic program. Attitudes toward teachers, parental support, and school board assistance were also significantly more favorable. They suggest a perception of integration in school/community relations.

Principals, Teachers, and Community Values in Localized Schools

The type of school system we have called localized appears to be more than a board working with principal and teachers. It may be a developing value system that supports and reinforces community traditions instead of attacking or supplanting them. What may be involved, too, is a weakening of professional orientations on the part of the school staff, which may lead to a different set of attitudes in the direction of educational change.

Diluting of Professional Orientations

Rural Alaska villages are distant from urban areas of Alaska and the contiguous 48 states. Two-thirds of them are not connected to urban locales by roads, and transportation by air or water is dependent on the vagaries of weather. Some villages are cut off from the rest of the state for weeks at a time in the winter. Caucasian school professionals who live and work in rural communities are an ethnic minority in most places, but the Native society they confront contrasts with ethnic subcultures of American cities. It is unusually open and accepting of Caucasian residents who identify with community values. And not withstanding rapid change in many areas where there are localized schools, it is the home of resilient traditional cultures.

Living in remote communities among people who are culturally and socially different--in a small school environment that usually lacks a "critical mass" of professionals--school personnel are unusally isolated from the professional mainstream. A frequent comment of teachers in schools is that they have few colleagues to talk with, to discuss problems of the classroom or community, and to use as sounding boards for ideas and evaluations. Isolation from one's colleague's and lack of opportunities for professional growth and development are among the factors that prompt teachers and principals to leave rural schools after a short period of time. Until job market conditions worsened precipitously in the contiguous 48 states and urban Alaska locales, the rate of staff turnover in many rural schools approached 65 percent a year. For those who have remained more than a year in rural schools, however,the alternative to conditions of anomie and isolation has been involvement in community activity.

Opportunities for participation extend outward from the school. Approximately half of Alaska's rural school teachers are involved in some community school activity, but involvement appears to intensify in the localized schools. First, there is socializing with parents and neighbors, and participation in community sports and games activities that take place in school facilities. Then, there are outdoor activities of the area, such as snowmobiling, skiing, dog sledding; and there are subsistence activities--fishing, hunting for birds and for large and small game. An option is extensive involvement in a church group and, where there are state recognized local governments, perhaps participation in local politics.

Administrators and teachers in localized schools appear to be less actively involved in professional associations--such as the state NEA--and less interested or attentive to the standard professional publications such as Phi Delta Kappan and Teacher. Preliminary results of a statewide survey of administrators and teachers suggest that there is stronger interest in conferences and meetings at which rural small school and Native education concerns are discusses--the state small schools conference and the bilingual multicultural conference, for example.

The largely hypothetical process we have discussed is not entirely dissimilar from the practice of Westerners in Third World societies who "go Native" and adopt the Native community as the reference point for personal values and goals. What makes the Alaska case unusual, however, is the relatively large number of Caucasians who have become adapted to village life and who prefer it to life in urban United States locales. In the process, they may have adapted teaching functions as well.

The Concept of "Deprofessionalization"

In the absence of longitudinal research, it is difficult to determine whether the apparently distinctive orientations and values of some Caucasian professionals in localized schools are a reflection of a momentary, transitional, or permanent condition. Analysis of field interviews and observations leads us to suspect that the behavior of some Caucasians in localized school communities is neither "professional" nor "unprofessional," in the senses in which these terms are used to describe the behavior of educators. The attitudes mentioned fit neither of these types, and for want of a better term we use the concept "deprofessionalization" suggested by L. Harmon Zeigler.

What this concept implies is the existence of an alternate reference group for behavior that is valued within communities, and attracts interest and support from teachers and school administrators in remote settings. It may be a new behavior mode for some Caucasians living and working in Native majority communities of rural Alaska. While the origin is obscure, the practice of "going Native" began as a significant process in the 1960s, when the War on Poverty moved to Alaska, and when young Caucasians entered villages as VISTA volunteers or assumed other community development roles. The linkages, if any, between this intercessor subculture and some Caucasian teachers and principals in localized schools remains to be established through further field research.

Impediments to Development of Localized Schools

There are greater opportunities for the formation of strongly localized influences in community schools than there are schools we can properly label localized. Review of extensive interviews in the localized schools pointed out these common factors which tended to be absent elsewhere.

First, the rate of professional staff turnover in localized schools appears to be somewhat lower than is the case statewide. Clearly, a staff that is continually refreshed with graduates of schools of education, or teachers transferring from urban districts, will be more responsive to the professional mainstream. Second, the turnover on localized boards is lower than is the case in the other types of schools. Board stability may perhaps reflect some apathy over school conditions, which is present in rural as well as urban Alaska and the contiguous-48 states. But we found no greater evidences of apathy in localized schools than those of any other type. Board stability, however, would appear to be necessary for any long-term control of local school operations.

Third, none of the localized schools had a disproportionate number of Caucasians on the local or regional board. The opposite is the case for the regionalized schools: in each of the districts with regionalized schools (with one exception), Natives were underrepresented on the regional boards, and they were poorly represented on local advisory boards.

Finally, only one of the nine localized schools was in a community connected to the state's road or ferry system. Surely, the isolated conditions of rural communities in Alaska facilitates the development of local control of education.

There are other impediments, too, as we learn when we investigate the "mixed" type of school control. But first we will look at another model of localization--the "unified" control type of the city school district.

CHAPTER 7. UNIFIED CONTROL OF RURAL ALASKA SCHOOLS

In 15 percent of rural Alaska places, there are small school districts having between one and three schools at one geographical location. Operations are controlled by integrated building-level and district office forces. These schools seem to realize one goal of the decentralization movement in Alaska and present the model of the future. The unified type of system achieves the goal because decentralization has occurred (presumably) to the ultimate extent--to the school building level. It is also a practical model: two city schools of the REAA system have withdrawn from that system since 1976, and formed locally controlled city school districts. One topic of community discussion in several large, regional centers currently under the REAA jurisdiction (such as Bethel, Kotzebue, and Ft. Yukon) is the reclassification of the city from the second to the first class, which would make it possible to form an independent city school district.

Previous chapters on regionalized and localized schools have made implicit comparisons to the unified model. This chapter focuses on the kind of control actors and community members in unified systems have and the associated outcomes. Too, we will be comparing operations of schools where there is no second-level of influence, to those where it is present (both regionalized and localized). Because the unified school systems appear to resemble urban more than rural patterns of school organization, we will consider the response of this system to educational problems of rural Alaskans who are in the process of transition to urban life.

Three of the schools in our original sample of 28 field sites represented the unified system of control. In second stage sampling we added a fourth site to this category, because it resembled urban more than rural school environments. Three of the four sites were school districts in Southeast Alaska. They represent well the city school districts of the state, most of which are in the southeast (the oldest area of western settlement in the state and the area where cities first developed). Southeast Alaska as a whole is culturally different from the rest of the state. The aboriginal population today is composed largely of Tlingit and Haida Indians, who are acculturated to western society.

The first field site was a small Native fishing village. The economy of the second depended on a lumber mill and commercial fishing. One-third of its residents were Indians. The third site was a large city by rural Alaska standards. Its economy was more diversified than any other rural Alaska place, but pulpwood and fishing were the major economic pursuits. Roughly 20 percent of its

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population was Indian. The fourth site was in southwestern Alaska. A large fishing village, this village was the region's center; 60 percent of its population was Alaska Native.

City School System and Environment

Localized schools, we found, were strongly penetrated by the local political environment, which their boards or ASBs tended to represent. Regionalized schools, on the other hand, were relatively insulated from their environments. The unified schools in our sample stood mid-way between, and this was curious given the vastly greater opportunities for "enactment" of environmental forces (but not at all curious given the condition of insulation found in urban American schools).

The sites had a number of economic interests and pressure groups, varying relative to the size of the community. In one community, however, the school board and administration did not represent other community institutions, with the exception of one board member who also sat on the village corporation board and two who worked in local businesses. (In this community, teachers were involved in several community institutions and some pursued the community's major means of livelihood.)

The second community's district school board represented the logging mill, commercial businesses, and city government, and this had some impact on the district's conservative approach to budgetary policy. The third community's board was connected to the professions, businesses, and other government institutions in town, but board members were relatively new to their board roles. The fourth and smallest community was the site in which the board was most inter-connected with other community institutions, having representation from the city council, church, and Native corporation. In this case, organizational interconnections and rivalries affected school system stability.

An impediment to the incorporation of community forces on the board and administration was the presence in three of the four communities of a relatively large number of school district employees, and their long tenure in the communities. This factor more than any other tended to facilitate the insulation of schools from community politics.

The city school system is different from other rural systems (the BIA or REAAs) in that a municipal government is responsible for providing public education. First class cities must have the resources to make local contributions to public schools, which are usually raised through sales or property taxes. Under the Alaska Constitution, school districts were incorporated into municipalities to reduce overlapping lines of authority and to ensure fiscal accountability of schools. However, several statutes enacted by the legislature after statehood have whittled away the cities' power over schools, leaving school districts with considerable autonomy.

In theory, the city school board remains subordinate to the city council with respect to finance. In fact, there is the possibility of either strong conflict between institutions with different purposes (general government as opposed to education) or harmonious relations. Our field sites represented both options. In one site, the schools were autonomous and the city council rubber stamped the district budget. In a second, there was some overlapping of school interests and concerns with the assembly, but little contention regarding the district's budget. The council in the third community had a "condescending attitude to the schools," said a district staffer. Yet the superintendent of that district claimed to have close working relationships with the city manager, and they were only occasional conflicts over the school budget. In the fourth community, city/school district conflict was intense, said a local administrator in the schools:

> There are personality clashes between the superintendent (who sat on the city council) and the former mayor. Also, there is competition for control between the school board and the city council. The city council would like to exercise more control over the school than the board is willing to allow.

This conflict ultimately had an impact on administrative personnel in the school system.

State-level relations of the city school systems were less troublesome than those of either regionalized or localized schools. Administrators spoke of the state's "support" for the districts and described relationships as generally "excellent." The independence of these districts from the state for some part of their revenue made their bargaining position with state agencies different from that of schools in REAA districts. For example, several administrators mentioned that in contrast to their colleagues who had to appear before the REAA legislative oversight committee, or justify expenditures and procedures to the state DOE or legislative budget and audit committees, they had a relatively free hand in the administration of the district.

All of the four sample sites were well-connected to the state's legislative process. Each head of schools was in frequent contact with that area's legislative representatives, and all had been relatively successful in obtaining capital projects funding for construction of new schools and remodeling of old ones. In one of the sample sites, however, the school district circumvented the city council by approaching the legislature for a grant to build a new gymnasium. The legislature funded the project, but it directed that construction be managed jointly by the city and the school district. Bad feelings and injured pride of council members (because the board preempted the city's CIP priorities) have influenced the progress of work.

Generalizing from the four cases to the class of city schools, it appears that incorporation of environmental forces is more likely in smaller communities, and is potentially most disruptive of school operations there. In the larger school systems, with stable school staffs, the operation of school programs was relatively autonomous.

Administrative Relations of Unified Schools

In regionalized schools, there were serious administrative problems in the relations between principals and teachers and the district office staff. The localized schools appeared to have fewer problems, largely because of supportive attitudes and policy of district staff and instability of district office personnel. However, unity of control per se does not appear to be associated with harmonious relationships of superintendents, principals, and teachers, as the cases of unified school systems illustrate. A more important factor appears to be tenure in the system.

Superintendent/Principal Relations

Only one of the four sample sites had a superintendent who had been in his position for longer than a year at the time of our site visits. Changeover of superintendents seemed to have loosened administrative systems in the three sites considerably. However, previous superintendents had exercised strong influence throughout the school system and created personalistic styles of operation, traces of which were still evident.

At the time of our field studies, two of the four superintendents exercised highly personalistic styles. In one case, the perception of school staff was that the principal was undercut by the superintendent, despite close working relationships. In the second, there were close ties between principals and the superintendent, and a division of labor regarding administrative functions. The superintendent's policy was that "principals are the captains of our ship." The greater tenure of principals than superintendents in the system also promoted administrative harmony.

The third district had a new superintendent who described himself as "a 4-month consultant." However, he believed in the operation of a chain-of-command throughout the administration, and exercised authority in a militaristic fashion. Said one teacher of the new superintendent's style:

> The super now is not very accessible. He's trying to show who's boss. He's got to show the board who's boss. The super is orchestrating things...

In this city school district, the principal had been on the job a number of years, but the perception was that his position was undercut by the superintendent.

The fourth district superintendent was serving in an acting capacity, and the board was in the process of recruiting a permanent replacement. That system had strong principals with established community ties who had been at their posts an average of 10 years. A board member said "the principals are Shoguns here, and run the show."

Three of the superintendents had offices in the same building as the principal, and contacts were frequent. Given the small size of these city school districts, the role of superintendent appeared somewhat redundant.

Administration/Teachers Relationships

The size of the teaching staffs at unified schools was very large by rural Alaska standards, and this affected administrative relationships. The smallest school system had ten teachers in one building and the largest had over 100, with the average about 50 teachers per district. This was a critical mass of teachers and it contrasted sharply with conditions we found in all other rural schools. Of equal importance, in three of the four districts, teacher turnover was very low (an average tenure of 11 years in the districts) which is an equally sharp contrast to the rural school pattern.

Teachers associations or unions, all NEA affiliates, were visible forces in each of the systems. In three, relations were brittle. In the year previous to the field study, NEA had sanctioned one district, calling the district's schools "dangerous" (because of a physical attack on a teacher) and the housing situation for teachers deplorable. This situation affected teacher turnover and morale, as pointed out by a school staff member:

> We have one of the highest turnover rates in the state. Out of 10 teachers last year, only two returned, so we have eight new teachers this year. This is partially a result of our troubles last spring, but it's also an historical trend here. We've had to focus on short-term staff development. If we can't do it in one year, it's not worth doing.

Notwithstanding the differences in size and turnover rates between unified and other rural school types, communication problems in the two schools with personalistic administrations were similar to those of regionalized schools. Teachers in both schools described the distortion and static in their communications with administrators (chiefly with superintendents). One new teacher castigated the superintendent's lack of honesty in describing local conditions before he signed a contract with the district:

> The housing was supposed to be here this fall. This is what we were told when we were hired.... We were also told that there were nurses at the clinic, but they only have health aides. The super told us too that the education was a very high priority in the community, and in fact, it's really at the bottom of the priorities. We were told that prices were 10-15 percent above Seattle, and they're actually a lot more. What's been most aggravating is that the reality of the situation here didn't meet any of our expectations. If we'd known the truth we probably would not have come here.

In the second school, a teacher recounted cases of arbitrary and capricious actions by the superintendent and the use of intimidating rumors that seemed calculated to alienate and frustrate teachers:

> The home-ec teacher when I first came had her program phased out. No one told her until contracts were handed out. Two other teachers who were terminated received no counseling, no indication that anything was wrong with their teaching. They just dropped it on them. Information doesn't always come in the right channels....
>
> When I presented evidence of a teacher buying booze for students, I was told I would be fired if I didn't keep quiet. The superintendent and the teacher were drinking buddies. Next year, I heard from students that my job was on the line. You hear things first on the grapevine. This causes problems--rumors about teachers being fired.

Such problems of communication with staff seemed particularly egregious given the proximity of administrators and teachers. The physical distance of most administrators in regionalized rural schools from teachers, therefore, may be less important to effective communications than the personalistic style of district superintendents.

Limited participation of teachers in school governance processes and in community activities were matters of concern in regionalized schools. In localized schools this was less likely to be the case, and the situation was even more favorable in the unified school communities. In the one site with high turnover and poor teacher/administrative relationships, teachers had some influence over curricular processes, but none in the community. In the other three sites, teacher influence extended through most phases of school governance, and expanded into the community. This influence, in turn, affected teacher/administration relations in two of the schools.

The situation of teacher influence in the community in both cases was based on economic activity that brought teachers into competition with community residents. Some village teachers engaged in commercial fishing during the summer vacation, earning handsome incomes for doing so but also competing with local fishermen. In one of the villages, for example, school teachers had secured limited entry permits, thus denying this scarce resource to other community members who lacked stable employment opportunities. This competition was thought to be a main factor in the "anti-teacher" attitudes of the communities.

Competitive action and negative community attitudes affected administrators' perceptions of teachers. Said one superintendent:

> The average teacher in _____ has been there for 14 years. The top teachers in the district made $45,000. Beginning pay is about $27,500. In addition to that a third of the teachers are involved in commercial fishing. So they augment their salaries

> considerably fishing. Money buys them a lifestyle in the community that they probably couldn't afford anywhere else.

An administrative perspective in the two communities was that teachers were "overpaid and underworked," which put a sharp edge on relations with teaching staff.

Political Relationships in Unified Schools

Regional board/local board relations were tense in both regionalized and localized schools. School-based boards competed for influence with the central office and regional board members. By definition, unified schools lack a local board and we expected this to enhance opportunities for harmony in the system. It was the case that political relationships of school boards in unified sites were less conflictual than those of the other types. The absence of a local board, however, was associated with lack of representation of diverse constituent groups in the community, especially the Native constituency in the three sites where Natives were not the predominant ethnic community.

Nature of Board and Administration Relationships

None of the four sites had strong school boards; each was substantially influenced in policymaking by the superintendent. Nonetheless, the conditions of board/superintendent relationships varied somewhat from site to site.

In the first site, the board (all-female) had had little turnover in recent years, and there were close and relatively harmonious relationships with the superintendent. The second site's board contained one member who had served 20 years, but there was a generation split on the board that limited consensus on some issues. Nevertheless, board/superintendent relationships were close. Teachers in the third district said the superintendent "buffaloed" the board, and said that he had "set it up." This weak board, which infrequently engaged in policy activity, had a plurality of new members. Most of the board members in the fourth board were also new to their role.

The general pattern (applying well to three of the four districts) was that the boards took their most important role to be selection of the superintendent, and then stayed away from administration. This is seen in comments about the weakness of the boards.

One board member described perceptions concerning the board in her community and attributed them to lack of experience and some fear:

> A lot of people do not realize that we, the school board, work for the community and that the super works for us. They feel that we work for the super. They think the super runs the school. They don't realize they can take things to the principal. Then to the super. People may be a little afraid. It's like going into an unknown area.

In a second community, a teacher remarked:

> I like the theory of local control of the school. It's not done as much here as they could. We never had had strong aggressive boards who are well-versed in their role.

And a board member in a third village commented that "the school board members are largely indifferent to education, but they like the prestige of the position."

Board Processes and Community Involvement

The unified school boards did not appear to differ in activity from most urban boards in the U.S. In two of the sample sites, there was little activity surrounding the board as an institution. Few residents compete for seats on the board--usually one or at the most two per vacant seat--and a minority of voters turned out for school board elections. Attendance at meetings was poor: not all board members bothered to attend, few school staff turned out, and only rarely did general members of the community attend meetings. In one case, the school had sent out 1,000 letters to community members, asking them to attend a board meeting to learn about a controversial issue, and only ten came.

In the other two sites, there was somewhat greater interest in the board. Few members resigned from board seats, and in elections, usually six or seven candidates ran for each vacant seat. Participation in board elections approached 60 percent in a recent election, said the superintendent. In all cases, attendance at board meetings varied by issue. When personnel matters were discussed, when local groups approached the board for financing, or when student travel was considered, attendance improved--as it did when the athletic program was on the agenda.

Board Representation of Community Views

At the time of our field visits, none of the unified school systems had building-level advisory boards or functioning PTAs. In all communities, there were groups that felt the district school board failed to represent their needs and concerns.

The status of PTAs appeared related, in each of the communities, to actions and perceptions of teachers' unions. A former board member in one village said:

> Years ago the school was community-minded. Then when the administration changed it went toward a more closed kind of school.... Teachers were not volunteering for anything unless they were paid. The strong teachers association may have something to do with this. The very mention of a PTA is a threat to the teachers. Always before parents' associations have gotten organized on a negative vote.

In a second community, the lack of some avenue for expression of protest led to a temporary exit of students from the school:

> Two years ago there was a blow-up.... Part of the community felt the board showed favoritism.... Part of the community felt the school was controlled by a small group. A very small group came up and herded their children out. The issue resolved itself through an open hearing.... The board was there but did not act as a board.

The new superintendent of this district then began issuing a weekly newsletter, and he developed a group of concerned parents at the school. This booster club enrolled twenty parents and, in the words of a community leader, had "helped the board a lot. They are generally representative of parents."

In the third site, the new principal had devoted time to revitalizing the PTA. A member of the organizing committee described some of the reasons in these terms:

> The principal walked into a real mess. For years the school had been slowly going down hill. There was no PTA. Things were just bad.... One of the problems is that the teachers are a clique. The parents feel that the teachers set themselves apart from other people in the community.

The fourth village was also one in which some parents were in the process of organizing a new PTA.

In all communities, there was a widely shared perception that an additional arena was needed for community representation. Activity in organizing PTAs was the generalized response to this condition, except in the largest community where interest groups had formed for the purpose of promoting special interests--for example, arts education in the schools.

A consistent issue of malrepresentation in three of the four communities concerned Native interests. In the community with an 80 percent Native majority, this was no problem: Natives held all seats on the school board, and special JOM committees functioned. A second Native majority community, however, had a board dominated by Caucasians; and in the two Native minority cities, no Natives sat on the district school board. Native leaders attributed this to "leadership problems" in the Native community:

> We had a Native member once. But he was a real dud. The problem is that if someone runs they are so jealous that nothing can be done. I ran for the board but the Indians didn't vote for me. The problem in the Native community is one of leadership. The Native community is very divided.

The difficulty appeared to be structural and not political. The responsibility for Native representation was relegated to parent advisory committees for federal Indian programs. These did not function effectively as general interest groups for Native parents.

The JOM committee in one village was inactive when the field visit took place. In a second village, the JOM committee represented the leadership faction of the village (which overlapped with school board membership), but it was thought by some community members to favor the interests of members and their families to the exclusion of all Native children in the school. The school board in the third village had been "very supportive of the program," in the view of the committee chair, but that committee represented interests of Native parents only with respect to the part of the curriculum that could be paid for with federal funds.

Thus, in communities with unified schools, the only route to influence over school policy was through the school board itself. The lack of Native representation on all but one of the four school boards weakened the legitimacy of the boards and perhaps affected Native involvement and participation in school activities. Said one school board member in western Alaska:

> Yes, I think that local people do have more influence but I don't think there is enough influence and input from the Native community. It's really a white man's rules. It may be that they find school a bit too frightening still.

And in a Southeast Alaska fishing village, a board member of the local Native corporation mentioned a view--widespread in the community among Natives--that had not been represented on the board. Teacher tenure, in his opinion, made it impossible to get rid of teachers whom the community did not wish to have, and teachers' contract demands had become excessive and resulted in the loss of the school's hot lunch program. Without a channel to express these views, opposition to school administrators and teachers "went underground." It surfaced, we would conjecture, as general hostility to teachers and denial of support to the school as a community instruction.

School Governance Processes in Unified Schools

When discussing regionalized and localized school's we examined the actual influence different school actors had on local school operations and looked for relationships between distribution of influence and action in specified functional areas. Localized schools were indeed much more subject to influence of local actors, notwithstanding the continued importance of superintendents and district boards. And these local actors, in many cases, had had an impact on hiring (particularly of support staff), curriculum (the shape and extent of the Native language and culture program), school calendar, discretionary budget, facilities design, and to a more limited extent, community use of facilities.

By definition, all actors in unified school systems are local, but only some respond primarily to local values. The leading question in analysis of school government in these schools is the extent to which there is professional control (by school administrators and teachers). Analysis of the four unified cases showed that professional control best described the condition of local school operations, but this did not have a simple, invariant impact on program emphasis.

In all four cases, superintendents were hired by school boards, two of which were conducting searches during the time of our field visits. Principals of schools participated in a limited capacity on a screening committee in one district, and the teachers' association was consulted in the second. In both these cases, the interest of the boards was in conducting a national search, and selecting the candidate on the grounds of executive management of the school system. Localized criteria were not used in these districts.

The two incumbent superintendents had been selected by boards that applied some local criteria. In one case, the previous superintendent departed the school precipitously, and a principal from the school was elevated to the superintendency. The feeling of board members was that this individual could relate well to the town. In the second case, the superintendent was hired because of his experience and expertise in school construction. That board emphasized the importance of adjustment to the community.

In all four sites, hiring of principals was done by superintendents, and two had been hired recently. That process reflected school administration objectives primarily. Superintendents also were the chief hiring officers for school teachers, but in this area principals participated in the screening of credentials in two cases. Describing a typical process, one principal remarked:

> The superintendent has the predominant influence. The board can overrule his selections, but this doesn't happen. The board can't interview. This is why the hiring is limited to the superintendent. There is no money for board members to travel to interviews. The board generally is presented with a contract and the person is there ready to be hired.

In no case were candidates for teaching positions brought to the communities for interviews with board members or community adults.

JOM and IEA committees were primarily responsible for the hiring of Native aides and part-time instructors paid with federal dollars. The hiring of school support staff such as secretaries, cooks, maintenance men, and the like was determined primarily by superintendents and principals. In the general area of hiring, then, professional administrators had greatest influence, and decisions were made primarily on grounds that were not directly relevant to community values.

The pattern in determing school curriculum was similar, with a change in actors. Said one teacher, "The curriculum has been completely (done by) teachers," and this observation applied throughout, with the exception of the largest unified school system where the board responded to an interest group in the area of special education.

In three of the four communities, teachers were permanent members of the community and sometime participants in the commercial fishing economy. This factor as well as substantial community interest was responsible for the teaching of courses relevant to the village economy: a fisheries course in one community, vocational courses related to the village economy such as boat building in two communities, and business courses in the largest town. The bedrock curriculum was traditional academics, however.

Natives were prominent groups in all four of the communities, with a larger proportion of the school enrollment than that of the city population. Yet only two of the four communities had students eligible for bilingual education courses, which were handled by itinerant teachers. Native culture courses and materials were primarily the responsibility of JOM and IEA committees (in one community, the Alaska Native Brotherhood was responsible). They included skin sewing, ivory carving, Native arts and dancing; these were a supplement to regular school offerings, for Native students only.

Community opinion was divided on these program areas. School board members generally rubber stamped the proposals, but there was some concern about their divisive impact. Members of Native organizations regarded the school administration and teachers as "insensitive to Nativeness" in most of the sites, the implication being that Native culture courses should be a regular part of the curriculum. However, some Native board members and adults questioned the value of Native culture courses. Said one board member:

> In the past, we've gone in for _____ dancing and art. This was successful for several years. But I feel my kids have enough to learn without having to learn almost a dead language. (The) art program here...(is) really good. I'd like to see it stay alive. Part of the culture is going to die, as the fishing industry does.

In three of the four sites, superintendents, sometimes assisted by principals, designed the budget from scratch and gained easy acceptance of it from the board. City councils in all these sites approved the budget without changes, for there were good relations with the city councils. In the fourth, the teachers had once had strong influence over the budget, through the teachers' association. At the time of our field site, the predominant influence of the board was being replaced by the superintendent, whose plan was to tighten the operation of the district:

> In the past, _____ schools have had a hesitant administration. The board has been more involved. I went to the board with a very specific organizational plan for next year, to bring the budget in line.... I think the board really desires to have the super run the schools, but they want to be informed of what's

going on. Three of them are managers themselves, so they want a strong manager.

There was one important respect in which school budgeting could be called responsive to community interests. Residents of first class cities and boroughs pay property or sales taxes, the chief rationale of which is to support public education. Notwithstanding the primary role of the state in paying for education in Alaska, these communities contributed a local share that amounted to nearly 20 percent of the school budget in two cases. In one district, the superintendent made extensive cutbacks to avoid an increase in the municipality's contribution. In two other cases, school administrators drew up tight budgets, reflecting well the conservative orientation of taxpayers in those communities.

School calendars were not a topic of particular interest in any of these schools. All had been in operation nearly a generation, and the important rhythms of community life--especially that of the commercial fishing season--had worked their way into the school calendar. Remaining questions, such as the length of the winter vacation, were resolved by teachers in three of the four cases.

This pattern of influence over school operations is distinctive for several reasons. First, professionals have predominant influence in all areas, with the exception of the selection of the superintendent. Among professionals, school teachers, whose tenure in all but one case was longer than principals and superintendents, had more influence than we noted in regionalized and localized types of school systems. Second, the response to community interests (especially those of Natives) was indirect and incomplete. Third, greater attention was paid to urban than to rural values. We gain a sense of this point by considering the opinion climate within schools.

Climate of Expectations in Unified Schools

The expectations of educators in unified schools were different in some respects from those in regionalized and localized types. Local administrators responding to the principal survey in 1981 were more likely to expect that students in unified schools would attend college, than those from other rural schools.

Table 17. Principals' Expectations of College Attendance (Unified)

		Unified	Other
70% or more		7.3	6.0
30 to 69 percent		51.0	31.4
less than 30 percent		41.7	62.6
	$P < 0.0271$	N=45	N=247

This relationship remained when we tested for the effects of school size and ethnicity. The strongest relationship occurred within large rural schools having over 100 pupils. Furthermore, more than half of the unified school administrators reported that graduates of their schools had gone on to college (compared to only 20 percent of all other rural Alaska schools).

However, community attitudes were not strongly supportive of education (elementary through college) in any of the four communities. Respondents in two communities mentioned that high school students could make between $10,000 and $50,000 during the summer commercial fishing season, much more than teachers' salaries in the community, and this was widely perceived among teachers and administrators as a disincentive to college attendance. Further, there was the question of what college-educated persons would do in the village. One board member expressed it in these terms:

> Young people who go away to college come back and seem to lose interest. But it's hard for a person to come back and succeed here. There's always someone hanging on to your feet.

Attitudes of principals regarding academic achievement and learning were positive in the unified schools, more so than those recorded for regionalized schools. Responses from the 1981 principal survey on this dimension noted:

Table 18. Principals' Perceptions of School Achievement (Unified)

Evaluation	Unified	Other
Among the best/better than average	55.3	30.1
About average	25.2	28.7
Below average/inferior	19.5	41.2
$P < 0.0253$	N=45	N=247

This relationship, too, withstood subgroup analysis, and it became strongest for the larger unified schools. However, teachers' responses to the same question, measured in the teacher survey one year later, were less positive. There was no significant relationship between teachers of unified schools and other rural teachers regarding the climate of student school achievement and learning.

Teachers differed sharply from principals in their expectations of student achievement:

Table 19. Educators' Expectations of Student Achievement (Unified)

	Principals		Teachers	
	Unified	Other	Unified	Other
Much/slightly above national norm	51.3	29.8	19.8	34.2
At national norm	22.5	30.2	33.5	29.6
Slightly/much below national norm	26.2	40.0	47.7	36.2
	N=41	N=210	N=103	N=187
	$P < 0.0152$		$P < 0.0152$	

The differences between teachers and principals, and between all unified school educators and those in other schools, narrowed when ethnicity was controlled. This was reflected in interviews with educators in the predominantly Native unified school. The principal's remarks were typical:

> My own personal level of expectation has gone down since I arrived here. When I started as an English teacher my expectations were too high. Very quickly my expectations became more realistic. The big problem is to overcompensate, to expect too little. This happens on our staff, though not comprehensively.

In a different community (majority Caucasian), a teacher commented "I would say that my expectations are probably higher now than a few years back. I've always had pretty high expectations." But in the field site with the largest number of teachers and an unhappy relationship between teachers and principal, perceptions were divided as noted above.

One other source of information regarding the climate of expectations is provided through preliminary results of the educator resurvey. We asked principals and teachers in 1983 what their most and least important roles were in their communities:

Table 20. Most/Least Important Roles (Unified)

Role Area	Most Important		Least Important	
	Unified	Other	Unified	Other
Develop technical skills	15.9 %	13.2 %	0.0 %	4.1 %
Support Native culture	0.0	2.6	41.3	29.8
Develop knowledge for community jobs	11.1	10.5	4.8	6.1
College preparation	20.6	7.3	1.6	12.3
Develop basic literacy	33.3	40.4	1.6	0.6
Develop management skills	0.0	2.0	22.2	13.2
Community needs are unimportant	0.0	0.6	4.8	7.3
None	0.0	0.0	11.1	18.4
Other	7.9	4.7	4.8	3.5
No response	12.7	10.5	7.9	4.7
	N=63	N=342	P< 0.0368	

This table presents data from teachers and principals in almost all of the unified schools in rural Alaska, and it reiterates points we heard frequently in field interviews. The climate of unified schools is far more likely to emphasize preparation for college than in any of the other school types; and it is far less likely to emphasize support of Native culture in the curriculum. These schools, as indicated, were larger and more diverse ethnically than those in any other type. They follow a model of urban education. The difference in responses of principals and teachers to aspects of school climate suggests a pattern less likely to be found in smaller rural schools.

Unified School Outcomes

Achievement

Academic performance in unified schools appeared to be better than among the other types of rural school systems. In elementary grades, students were achieving at the average of two grades above level in two of the schools, and near grade level in the other sites. However, achievement of high school students was less good, at least two grades below level in three schools; and we heard several comments in each school community to the effect that some high school graduates could not read or write.

Student Adaptation and Retention

Absenteeism, dropout, and vandalism rates were higher in unified schools than in any other type. Aggregate data and responses from the principal survey indicated that absenteeism rates were an average of 3 percent higher. Some 45 percent of unified schools had instances of vandalism compared to 24 percent of all other rural schools.

Absenteeism was a particular concern of teachers and administrators in all schools. The very high rates--a daily average of 10 percent in two of the school sites we visited--had prompted the administrators and teachers of one school to establish a new policy on absenteeism, which suspended students after ten unexcused absences. Dropouts were a serious problem in one of the sample sites. In that site, the data were suspect (in that students who left school frequently attended school elsewhere). Vandalism instances were common.

In fact, the entire quality of student behavior in unified schools was different from that in the other types we have studied. Discipline problems were serious in three of the four schools and caused frustration to teachers. Questions on student behavior in a Native majority school elicited this passionate response from a teacher:

> Disciplining of children is nonexistent. If people come along and expect high school decorum they don't get it. They get the full range of verbal denunciation--cursing, ill-concealed threats to physical welfare. Nobody anywhere who can shut it off.
>
> Out of 40 high school students there are about six who would be truants in any other system. In fact, they would be in detention cells. Two or three would be psychiatric cases....

This teacher went on to remark how shocked he was at the "very frank gross discussion of sex" which occurred openly in classrooms in defiance of authority. Regular mentions were made of problems with abusive language, and disruptive behavior that were attributed variously to the prevalence of drugs and alcohol in the community, lack of parental influence over teenagers, and lack of discipline in the schools.

Behavior problems occurred in all of the Southeast Alaska schools. These are the most urban of Alaska's rural schools, with the closest connections to influences from the contiguous-48 states. The problems appeared to be exceptional in the context of rural Alaska education, but of course seem relatively mild when compared to urban school scenarios. There appeared to be no close relationship between problems of this nature and the unified type of control.

Community Perceptions

We consider below the responses of community residents to school actors in unified schools.

Table 21. Community Attitudes Toward School Actors (Unified)

School Actor	% agree	% disagree
Principal		
...is doing a good job	59.1	6.8
...keeps people informed about the school	58.1	23.3
...does what most parents want	41.9	9.3
...tries to do something about problems in the school	75.6	0.0
Talk to the principal often (once a month or more)	43.2	15.9
Teachers		
...are doing a good job	36.4	11.4
...are very concerned about children	29.5	15.9
...try to do something about problems in the school	56.1	4.9
Talk to teachers often (once a month or more)	40.9	4.5
Teachers take a part in community activities	37.8	53.3
...visit teachers in their homes often (once a month or more)	13.6	31.8
Teachers visit my home often (once a month or more)	18.6	34.9
District Board		
...does what most parents want	30.0	35.0
Talk to regional board member often (once a month or more)	60.0	7.5
...tries to do something about problems	60.0	7.5
Superintendent		
...keeps region informed about local school problems	51.3	33.3
...does what most parents want	35.9	28.2
...tries to do something about problems in the school	57.5	2.5
Talk to superintendent often (once a month or more)	53.7	17.1

N=46

(There were no responses to questions on the local board, given the absence of ASBs or other school advisory committees in all of the unified sites.)

Comparing these data to responses of residents in other rural school communities, we note one large and two small areas of difference. Residents of unified school communities were far more dissatisfied with teachers in their schools. Teachers, they said, are not doing a good job and are not concerned about children. In only one of the evaluation areas, "doing something about problems in the school," did a majority of the respondents evaluate teachers highly. The chief area of criticism, however, related to lack of integration in the community. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents felt teachers did not take part in community activities.

Comparing across system types, we noted slight differences in evaluations concerning the district school board and superintendent. The perceptions of residents in unified school communities was that boards and administrators were not doing what parents wanted and not keeping parents informed about conditions in the school.

We also had information on community perceptions with respect to subject areas taught in the school system.

Table 22. Community Perceptions of School Programs (Unified)

Subject Area	Good	Not Very Good
Teaching of math	53.5	11.6
Teaching of reading	32.6	27.9
Teaching of Native culture and language	19.0	14.5
Training children for lives in community	26.8	39.0
Training children for lives outside community	25.6	34.9

Comparing these data with responses of residents in all other rural schools, we noted significant differences in four of five areas. Only in the evaluation area of math programs were community residents complimentary. Given the absence of a formal curriculum in Native language and culture at most unified schools, we would not expect a favorable community evaluation. The remaining areas of program evaluation are different, however. Unified school teachers and administrators are more likely to emphasize college preparatory work than staff in other rural school systems, and college implies a life outside the community. Community residents were not of the opinion that these programs were successful.

The final measure reviewed general satisfaction and dissatisfactions of residents with school and school/community conditions:

Table 23. Community Perceptions of School and Community Conditions (Unified)

Community Perceptions of...	% agree	% disagree
School calendar and schedule fit local needs	65.2	4.3
School is used for local activities	63.0	13.0
School has a good program in Native language and culture	26.1	26.1
Academic program is good	41.3	17.4
Teachers try to help the school and community	39.1	23.9
Parents support school and take part in school activities	34.8	43.5
Principal/superintendent help meet local goals	41.2	15.2
School board helps to meet local goals	47.8	15.2
Students try hard to do their best in school	21.7	41.3

Three areas of difference stand out in these community evaluations. First, evaluations of academic program are significantly less possitive. Second, evaluations of teachers are far more negative in unified schools. Third, both parents and students were thought to be part of the problem, in the view of community residents.

These data are of limited validity. We have a small number of respondents from unified schools (and, presently, no systematic data from other communities having unified schools). Yet there is an agreement across different sources of data. Removing a level of influence from the structure of schooling seems to be associated with generally happier attitudes toward district boards and staffs. The discontent in unified schools focuses largely on teachers, who have more influence in this type of system than in any other in rural Alaska.

CHAPTER 8. MIXED CONTROL IN RURAL ALASKA SCHOOLS

In one-third of rural Alaska's schools, the questions of amount and distribution of control over school operations are unsettled. In some of these schools, there appears to be a vacuum of influence; in others, the school is a pressure cooker, absorbing influences from the community, district office and broader region. In most of the schools in this type, however, there is some conflict between regional, local, and other forces.

When we established pure forms of regional and local control on the basis of principals' perceptions of influence in 1981, we found that nearly half of Alaska's rural schools fell into the residual category of "mixed" control. The second stage sampling process expanded the number of regionally and locally controlled schools, leaving 36 percent in the mixed category. Seven of our 28 field sites were drawn from this type.

Because the type describes competition and conflict for control over schooling, initially there appeared to be limits to our ability to generalize from the seven brief case studies. Yet, we found it easy to go beyond the unique configurations of actors and events in each of the seven cases and we have stated dimensions that appear to apply within the domain of mixed schools.

The case studies individually and collectively also informed us of major problems in the implementation of decentralization. In several of the cases, conflict could be traced to an area of ambiguity in law or contradiction between the multiple objectives of the decentralization movement. In this respect, analysis of the mixed control type provides our best commentary on implementation problems in state educational policy.

Our approach to description of the cases of mixed control varies from that we adopted in Chapters 5-7. Because we are analyzing administrative and political conflict and competition, we will attempt to assess the contributors to that condition in each case and define the chief areas. The chapter concludes with brief summaries of data from all schools in the mixed type regarding climate of expectations and school outcomes.

Local Pressures in Regionalized Systems

The first category of analysis includes two field sites that are examples of local pressures in regionalized systems. One of these sites was in a REAA district that had mostly regionalized schools. The particular school we visited seemed a good illustration of vacuum

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of power at the periphery. The second site was from a district we have not discussed previously, but the situation in that school strongly resembles one of the field sites in Chapter 5. The school we visited seemed a good illustration of conflict at the periphery.

Vacuum of Power at the Periphery

Our first case was a school site in a southwestern Alaska fishing village. The population of the village was predominantly Native. Most adults engaged in commercial fishing, and the community was relatively wealthy by rural Alaska standards. Non-Natives in the community included the principal teacher of the school and ministers of a nondenominational mission in the village. The chief characteristic of this village was its small size: only 45 individuals lived there in 1982 when we made our site visit. With the exception of school and mission personnel, all other members of the community were relatives, comprising two large families. The school had only one teacher who doubled as the local school administrator. A maintenance man completed the staff. A total of seven students attended this multi-grade elementary school during the 1981-82 academic year. Although this was the smallest school community of our sample, it resembled many other single-teacher schools throughout the state.

District Forces. The school site was at the periphery of the REAA district, and could be reached only by charter plane. Telephone communications with the district office were poor. District office policies were implemented through the superintendent directly, the district headquarters office, or through the area principal. There were ample opportunities for conflict among these agencies, but none appeared to have intruded on school affairs. In fact, what seemed apparent from the field site visit was the very weak role played by the school district in that school and community.

The district superintendent had visited the school three times in the preceding year, primarily to talk with villagers about construction of a new school building. The principal teacher said she had "nothing to do at all with the regional board." The area principal visited more often, and his role was that of a facilitator, in the opinion of the principal teacher. The central office sent out supplies periodically. Essentially, the village and its school operated in the shadow of district policy.

School Forces. The school teacher had been in the village for a year and a half, and did not expect to stay beyond the end of the school year. She was the third teacher to have served in this community since it came under REAA control in 1976, which indicated the same pattern of staff turnover we noted among regionalized schools generally. However, the principal was not dissatisfied with the district office or superintendent.

The principal teacher was not particularly aggressive in her administration of the school. For example, in discussing how behavior problems were handled in the school, she expressed a non-directive decisional style:

> When I had problems, for example, not doing homework, smoking, I'd go to the parents and say, "What do you think?" That's how I handle all of the decisions here.

Perhaps her lack of aggressiveness was a factor in reducing pressure in this school. A different interpretation, however, is that she did what she, advised by parents, felt necessary and the regional system was loose enough at the periphery that no one noticed.

Community Forces. The community gave the appearance of general apathy toward this school. There was no local board or advisory committee. There did not appear to be any substantial local-level influence over the school's operations. But what the most influential resident of the community had to say gave a different slant to community involvement:

> People don't want to say anything at meetings. We didn't have enough advisory committee meetings last year. See, this is a very small community. If you say something in a meeting you may offend someone. There are really only two families here. Mine is the biggest. We're not just a village, we're a family.

Indeed, the village was an extended family, and its involvements and concerns with the school were manifested in the form of family politics. Disagreements, problems, and tension were expressed through personal bickering and gossip, which eventually reached the titular head of the family. He made the decisions, or decided not to decide.

These were the contributing factors to the situation of influence at the first field site. There were no conflicts over staffing, curriculum, finance, calendar, facilities use or other areas of school operations. But there was an incident in the community that showed us how the control process worked.

The principal teacher of the school complained of harassment by the maintenance man who, in her view, took advantage of his position, got in her way, and when she restricted his access, began a campaign to evict her from the village. This situation festered for several months, but it never entered any formal part of the school system. Finally, the village chief felt he and the community had had enough:

> But now they come up here and say it (complain about the teacher). I'm just tired of it. People coming up to gossip about things. That's not the way to do it..... I got to do something. There's just too much bickering going on here.

At the time of the interview, his decision was gradually being formed to remove both teacher and maintenance man, but to wait until the end of the school year to do this (when the teacher would probably leave anyway).

Had this village been closer to the center of the regionalized system, the district office would likely have intervened. Were it in a localized community, the board would have addressed the issue and acted. In this community, neither event occurred, and in the absence of influence the situation was left to resolve itself.

Conflict at the Periphery

The second field site was in interior Alaska, a community of nearly 100 in what might be called a "fly-in" village. Many of the adults in the community worked at a federal installation, and they were mostly Caucasians--unlike the majority of the people in the district who were Natives. The K-12 school had three teachers and 25 students in 1982; one of the teachers served as principal teacher. This school community had a history of conflict with the REAA district.

District Forces. The district office and superintendent resembled in behavior actors in another district with a regionalized school (discussed in Chapter 5). The superintendent had been in office nearly 10 years at the time of the field study, and he was a strong advocate of the localization of schooling. District policies and procedures, however, seemed to contradict the spirit of local control, insofar as they affected the field site.

The list of district policies was extensive and, perhaps of greater importance, attempts were made to implement them to the building-site level. A district wide policy on recruitment placed ASBs in an advisory role only, leaving hiring in the hands of the superintendent and board. A district wide calendar specified common starting and ending dates of the school year. There was a district wide curriculum in the basics and a Native language curriculum. Maintenance was handled out of the central office, and construction designs and plans (as well as scheduling) were arranged there as well.

The district superintendent, staff, and regional school board worked closely together. The board was all Native, which gave it legitimacy in this interior Native region of the state.

School Forces. The small school staff had been in the site a number of years and the rate of turnover was low. Faculty were actively involved in the community, and the school principal worked closely with the local ASB. School/community relations were harmonious.

Community Forces. This site's local advisory board was strong and active. Members were established individuals in the community who took an interest in schooling. Board elections were contested vigorously, and participation in elections of the ASB and in its meetings was higher than we noted in most parts of rural Alaska. There were divisions on the board during its history, but it was united in its attitude toward the district office and superintendent: they, in the opinion of board members, had consistently discriminated against the school because most of the students and the community itself were Caucasians in a Native majority region.

A History of Conflict. Interviews in the field site and district office revealed several instances of conflict between district and local forces, concerning most areas of school operations. There had been two disputes over staffing in the school, and these had been among the most serious. In the first instance, which occurred four years before the field site visit, the local ASB had objected to the assignment of a principal teacher because of that person's rumored "loose morals." The district did not act on community objections, and as a result the local board and community adults reacted. They initiated an investigation out of Anchorage and Juneau and threatened to remove their children from the school until the principal teacher was removed by the district. The second instance developed near the time of the site visit, when a teacher who went on leave for a year was replaced by the district without permitting the local board to interview candidates or otherwise influence the selection process. The local board was prepared to do battle against the district again over this issue. From the perspective of the local board and parents, there should have been substantial local input into decisionmaking on the personnel who would serve in the school, and they pointed to district policy that seemed to permit this. The perspective of the district, on the other hand, was that there were legal requirements to be met. A district staffer said:

> The ASB is not supposed to select the person, rather to recommend. They often say they do. The principal or principal teacher has the authority to reject the information. The reason is that we have gotten into situations where the ASB didn't hire the most qualified person. When rejected applicants who were most qualified took the case to the Human Rights Commission, the district office lost the case.

In the area of curriculum, the district was then proposing a bilingual education program. The local ASB was unanimously opposed to this action, and almost all of the community (with the exception of the small minority of Natives) supported the board. A third area of conflict was over school finance. The local board and staff claimed that the site's federal program funding (JOM, IEA) had gone to other schools in the district. For this reason, when the district proposed on-site budgeting, the ASB was the first board in the district to try the novel concept.

A final area of conflict concerned school facilities construction. Shortly after the REAA district began, the local board asked for an addition to the school, but the district declined to build facilities. The board then contacted the legislative representative of that area, who filed a capital projects bill on behalf of the community. Suddenly, the district found money for the construction. Four years later, the local board wanted to add a gymnasium to the school, and was turned down again by the district. When community members started to build the gym on their own, funding was found for this addition.

Had this school site been closer to the center of the regionalized system, the district office might have been more likely to share authority with the local board, or at least accede more readily to its requests. (Alternatively, the local board might have been less successful in bucking district actions than it was.) In a localized community, there would have been few conflicts. In this community, location at the periphery of the system increased opportunities for conflict.

Regional Pressures in Localized Systems

The second category of analysis includes four field sites that are examples of regional pressures in localized systems. All four sites we visited were in REAA districts that had mostly localized schools. The particular sites were illustrations of local tension with the district office, and community/school conflict and competition.

Local Tension over Regional Policy

Two field sites were in a western Alaska REAA district that prided itself on its implementation of local control. The region is one of the most traditional, Yupik-speaking Native regions of the state. The majority Native population was primarily dependent on subsistence hunting and fishing and government transfer payments for its existence. One of the sites was a high school with under 100 students and a staff of nine, including the principal. The other site was a much smaller school, having under 50 students and a husband/wife teaching team.

District Forces. The superintendent of this district described it as a "confederation rather than as a centralized school district." But there was tension in the district office between that view and the perception of a district staffer that "we've given more attention to the ASBs here than anywhere I've worked. We may have gone too far in giving the ASB powers." There was also tension between the district administration and the school board, which was increasing its influence. And on the board itself, conflict had developed between the district's largest schools and population concentration at the regional center and the villages. Thus, the policy signals sent to local schools, particularly the two we visited in 1982, were mixed.

School Forces. Both schools were pleasant working environments, and had attracted good staff who enjoyed teaching in the Native communities. There were few problems of alcoholism in the very traditional villages, and the social institutions of church and family system socialized village youth to respect authority. Teachers did not mention behavior problems we noted in larger and ethnically transitional areas. In fact, the communities seemed to be magnets for dedicated teachers.

Community Forces. ASBs in both communities were relatively strong and closely connected to principal and principal teacher of the schools. These ASBs were less tightly connected to the traditional council (or IRAs) of the villages, which contributed to some diffusion of power. Said a teacher in the larger community:

> The school board has their slice. If they want something they usually get it. The district office has a lot. ____ (principal) goes to the ASB in the village. He's very adept at getting input. No one person has a corner on the market around her.

The teacher neglected to mention community adults who were satisfied with the school programs, and thought that teachers were dedicated and local administrators listened to them and helped them achieve community goals.

Tensions over Personnel and Curriculum. Relations between local ASBs, school staff, and the district office could not be described as conflictual, but they were tense. Ambiguity surrounded the district's implementation of personnel and curriculum policies. District office personnel actions had agitated local boards and community members.

The perception of local administrators war that they were not involved in the staff selection process and that local ASBs had input only at the time of the initial interview with job candidates. Said the principal, "Many of us are gone during the summer when the hiring is done, so it probably comes down to few teaching principals or central administration staff."

Moreover, the district's policy of rotating teachers from school to school, and moving local administrators without community involvement in the decision, angered administrators and residents. In one case that occurred two years before our site visit, the district office had planned to transfer a principal. He recounted the event:

> We heard on the radio that a certified principal had been mandated for ____ (field site). I went to see the village leaders. They had a meeting and 60 or 70 people turned out. They were supporting my staying here and continuing to be principal.

The district office perspective was that ASBs in some villages of the district had too much power, far more than the regional board had delegated to them. ASB pressures, in the opinion of the district office staff, caused administrative problems and insecurity among teachers. The district lost control over administrators whose communities and ASBs wanted them to stay. And in those villages where administrators or teachers were unwanted by ASBs, the district was forced to reassign staff, who felt insecure about their positions (and blamed the district).

The school principal of the site nicely summarized the tensions that ambiguity in district policy (and development of localized schools in the district) had brought about:

> I have an unofficial perception that my own concept of my job is more in line with the regional school board's concept than with the district office. I feel I should make more than a one or two year commitment, that it's incumbent upon me to learn the values and the language of the community. I think that the district office wants to move people in and out of the communities.
>
> (Why?) The district may have an educational concern about students having the same teacher four or five years in a row. They may think that a student's education would be more well-rounded if they had more than one teacher. They may also have a social concern. The teachers actually become members of the community in which they live if they stay there a long time. The result is that you may have a personnel problem if you wish to discharge or move a teacher that's been in the community a long time.

The issue concerned more than personnel matters. It involved the power of the Native community to determine who would teach in the schools and influence the values of village youth.

Curriculum in both sites was an issue of some controversy. One teacher pointed out the center/periphery aspects of the problem by saying that the district tried to give village schools the same curriculum used in the regional center, where high schools were at a different level and language skills were dissimilar. Parents of school children joined teachers in feeling that use of the centralized curriculum was inappropriate for their community:

> At this time, no, we don't have materials in Yupik. We want our children taught in our own language, instead of from ____ (the regional center). The people are working on Yupik (language materials). We tried to go through the district but they said they could not do it.

Neither of these two sites had exploded in conflict over problems between village schooling and the district office and board. However, there was competition for influence over the staffing of schools and curriculum, and some tension because of ambiguity that could be traced to the way the district office (and board) was implementing decentralization.

Community Conflict over the Local School

The third field site was in northern Alaska. It, too, was at the periphery of the school district. The community was a Native majority one, in the Inupiat Eskimo region, but social change had been rapid in the community and the old ways were dying fast. About 100 students attended the elementary and secondary schools in the village. The combined staff of eleven was headed by a principal.

District Forces. This district also had policies advocating local control of village schools, and they varied from actions that had the effect of centralizing school practice on a district-wide basis. The school district board and administration were caught between a Native revivalist movement, spearheaded by the regional ANCSA corporation and nonprofit association, and supporters of the status quo, including the region's legislative representatives in the state capital. Regional policy had thus followed a zigzag course; but at the time of our site visit, it appeared to infringe on village school autonomy. Also, in this district the superintendent left office during the study period, largely as a result of erosion in his support on the board whose complexion changed in an election.

School Forces. Pressures focused on the school from both district and community, and the local school had internal conflicts of its own. The principal was roundly disliked by teachers: he administered the school poorly, evaluated staff subjectively, and had poor relations with community residents. Teachers complained that they had little influence over school processes. They were manipulated by the district office and principal, and exposed to an increasingly negative climate toward teachers in the village. Finally, staff infighting had reduced camaraderie and the mutual support with which tensions and pressures might have been meliorated.

Community Forces. A widely shared perception of teachers and some community members was that the ASB was too weak. Said one teacher:

> The district is trying to get more power to villagers so they can run their own schools, but the people don't understand how to work within the system. People in the village look to the school as a source of jobs, not of education for their children.

The community was indeed divided, and jobs and economic opportunities were one part of the problem. This site was one of the few villages within the region where non-Natives could own land and businesses. Several of the teachers owned homes and property in the village; one served on the city council and was vice-mayor of the town. A non-Native owned a general store in the village. And, some Caucasians cut wood for heating homes, which affected economically the Natives who depended on sale of firewood for part of their income.

These economic and political rivalries, called "racial prejudice" by several teachers, made unity of community around the school and its programs impossible.

Conflict over School Operations. In almost every area of school operations, there was conflict between district and local actors or between one set of local actors and another. This appeared to be a factor causing hostility in the school environment.

District staffing procedures clashed with preferences of local school actors on several occasions. Local ASB members wanted teachers with Alaska experience, but often the staff sent to the village were outsiders. The evaluation process within the district, in the opinion of several teachers, was biased. One teacher claimed that the principal tried to involuntarily transfer him because of his ties to the community. In this case, the ASB supported him, but the district office followed the superintendent's recommendation until he filed a grievance.

Conflict over the curriculum was more intense. The district changed its curriculum policy during the year of our field study, and prepared to institute a bilingual curriculum in English and Eskimo, district-wide. Teachers had no input into the curriculum development process and claimed that they were ignored in the preparation of materials to be used in classes. ASBs had not been involved fully, and it appeared that board members supported the existing academic program.

Other areas--the school's budget, use of the gym, school calendar--involved different sets of actors in conflict with one another. There was little that was not potentially the subject of dispute at this school.

Environmental Pressure on Community and School

The sixth field site was a road system community in interior Alaska. The Native village (Athabascan) coexisted with a highway community of Caucasians, and the village was the site of a federal installation--giving the area more economic and social diversity than is usually found in rural Alaska. The village K-12 school sat between the different communities. It had over 100 students and a staff of 12, including the principal.

District Forces. At the time of our site visit in 1982, the school's REAA district had a relatively strong policy emphasizing community control of schools, with a superintendent who implemented the policy sensitively. Such had not always been the case, however, and the history of district/local conflict had influenced several schools in the region.

Until one year before the study, the district school board was a divided one. It regularly played out the tensions of this complex region. Political differences between conservative, road system business interests and those who sought expansion of educational opportunities overlapped with Native/Caucasian conflicts. Perhaps of equal importance, the communities that were grouped somewhat artificially into the REAA district competed with one another, the greatest competition being the center/peripheral contest of outlying villages against the region's center city.

School Forces. These regional pressures affected the development of the village school we visited. Community leaders claimed it had been denied resources for years, even though the town's population was one half the size of the regional center. The school district declined to construct teacher housing, and this influenced the ability of the school to hold staff over the years. The district assigned no principal to the school, and neglected it. This affected school morale and student behavior. The federal installation rotated to the site employees without families, largely because of poor school conditions.

Community Forces. A combination of forces from the school, district office, and community reversed this situation, and reconstructed the school in the late 1970s. The district office appointed a full-time principal, who directed attention to marrying interests of disparate community groups. A group of young Native women mobilized opinion in support of the school. Teachers in the school unified and, with the school administrator and Native leaders, decided:

> to stop fighting _____ (the regional center). We didn't ignore them or oppose them; we just began to develop pride in our school. Then, we got along with the district much better, and we started to get things.

An important action was the successful attempt by local and district forces to change the staffing policy of the federal installation, so that employees with families would live in the community. When families arrived, the adults were involved in school activities and governance, and urged to take positions on the local ASB. The federal employees became the glue joining Native community leaders and Caucasian highway residents.

At the time of our site visit, the ASB represented Natives and Caucasians (including federal employees). It worked closely with teachers and principals, and was consulted regularly by the regional staff and board. In the year of our visit, the community elected an influential Native to the regional board, a person committed to reducing regional and ethnic hostilities in the district as a whole.

Sharing of Influence. One approach to this site's experience of school development would be to emphasize the conflict between several sets of actors and forces. Our site visit convinced us, however, that this was not the process at work. In examining areas of school operations, we found cooperative exchanges and sharing of influence across the range of school actors. For example, the system used to select staff was based on a district policy emphasizing local participation, implemented through a staff selection committee on which the community was represented. There was a regional office practice of deferring to the judgment of teachers, principal, and ASB members from the community. Teachers participated primarily in curriculum development and student affairs, but they brought new ideas to the local board in other areas, and were in contact with the district office concerning educational programs. The joint JOM/IEA committee was composed of the most influential Natives in the community. It brought proposals to the local ASB and planned activities--such as student trips, awards, tutoring assistance--together with teachers and the principal, with a conscious eye to avoiding the development of divisive programs in the school. The school was then planning the construction of a new addition, and deliberations on its design involved teachers, the principal, local ASB, and other community members.

An incident that occurred in the community during the site visit illustrated the cooperative approach to school government that had been developed. One ASB member insulted a teacher in a community bar, and the words ("she can't teach, drunk or sober") spread instantly throughout this small community. Within a day, an emergency meeting of the ASB was held where--in the presence of the concerned teacher, fellow board members, the principal, and a district staffer--the board member apologized. The manifest concern was to avoid shattering the fragile spirit of community that had been developed through the school.

Competition for Influence at the Center

Previous cases speak to the major issues in the type of control we have called "mixed"--*competition, cooperation and conflict in school communities ranging around the periphery of territorially large school districts*. The last case represented an entirely different situation of mixed control--competition between district office and local school at the same geographical site. This case resembled in important respects the structural tension between principals and superintendents of unified school districts.

The seventh field site was also on the road system. The school district was predominantly Caucasian, and most adults had jobs in federal installations, state offices or schools, or private enterprises. The Native population of the district did not exceed 10 percent of total enrollment. The distinctive aspect of this site was that it was located adjacent to the district headquarters. The site itself was a K-12 school, with nearly 200 students and almost twenty staff, including the school principal. Only the geographic expanse of the district and the small size of all schools outside the region's central city justified including it in the rural school category.

District Forces. Within the first year of its establishment, this REAA district was one of the most divided in the state. Three recall elections were held, and the board was divided along the north/south lines shaping the district. Instability on the board was matched by mobility of superintendents, and a general deterioration of morale throughout the system's schools.

The incumbent superintendent was hired into this conflict, and he immediately set about restructuring the pattern of regional alliances and sectional loyalties. An early act was to move the headquarters of the district to the center of the district, as one means of unifying forces.

The district office relocation was followed by a change in the structure of power affecting the district's schools. The superintendent persuaded the board to decentralize purchasing, student affairs, and a small amount of budgetary authority to local ASBs, while *recentralizing* curriculum development to the district office. The approach this superintendent took and the process he used to implement it are worth describing in detail:

> Four years ago we had serious problems with band uniforms. At board meetings, there was incredible fighting over uniforms. The board was split 6-3, which reflected the split in communities.... Then, I took over the curriculum. I told the ASBs and the district board that the district needed a unified curriculum and the schools needed to share resources in this area. At the same time, I divied up 1 percent of the district budget and handed it to the ASB s on a per pupil basis, calling it a ASB discretionary fund....
>
> They could spend it on whatever they wanted but had to use it largely for instructional purposes. They needed the principal and head of the CSC to sign off on it.... This cut the business of the district board by about 60 percent. Now the uniform business goes to the ASB and the regional board doesn't deal with this issue. If the ASB comes to the regional board with a request, the board listens; but if an individual comes, the board will not listen. This change has made people happy.

That this process worked in reducing tension was recorded in comments we heard throughout the district. The regional division of the board continued, but its discussions were in the more abstract realms of district curricular policy, grievance policy, and the like. The highly symbolic and emotional matters, such as student trips and athletic contests, which occupied much board attention elsewhere in the state, did not trouble this district board.

The superintendent believed that his policy, and that of the district, endorsed local control, but he regarded himself to be as much a local as a regional actor affecting schools:

> I try to treat ASBs as my own board, but also try to get principals to act as the superintendent to their ASBs. Working with committees needs a lot of groundwork.... I believe in local control and am willing to give on everything that I couldn't appear to give on. We operate as much through the ASBs as through the regional board.... I attend all the ASB meetings I can.

The effect of this interpretation of local control in the district, however, was to create ambiguity concerning the operations of the local school.

School Forces. The school staff at the site was not a united one. The principal was new to the job at the time of our site visits, and his relatively heavy-handed actions had antagonized teachers and others. For example, to show teachers that he was boss he moved the teachers' lounge to the rear of the building, centralized student activities accounting in his office, and conducted staff meetings separately with elementary and secondary teachers, thereby dividing their influence. He also sought appointment of his wife to the school staff.

Community Forces. The three-member ASB functioned regularly in this school community, and it represented individuals strongly concerned with the school. ASB members tended to feel, however, that the board was being manipulated by administrators. As one board member commented: "The ASB is strictly advisory now, the superintendent and principal made them think they have power, but they don't."

The community in which the site was located had distinct groups and factions. Federal employees squared off against employees of one large private concern. Both were interested in what the ASB did, and were generally supportive of it (albeit occasionally critical).

Conflict Avoidance and Competition

The situation of school and district at the time of our study was one of potential conflict. The principal and superintendent were rivals who used the local and regional boards as arenas to play out disagreements.

Staffing was an issue area in which competition occurred without conflict. When the principal sought to hire his wife, the superintendent could have disapproved the request outright. Instead, he asked the principal to gain concurrence of the ASB, and this body declined to approve. However, the process bothered board members. Said one:

> So many people are turned off. I walked off in anger, I didn't know what to do. This is where the politics comes in. I was bothered about how the job position was done and felt as though I were a pawn in someone else's game.

There was the appearance of local board influence in hiring of support staff, but the chief controller was the superintendent, with the principal having lesser influence.

In another area, facilities construction, the superintendent revealed a different pattern of influence. He had failed to ask the legislature for sufficient money to complete an energy conversion project, and it stood unused near the school. His approach, however, was to admit the mistake and seek to involve the board where possible:

> When I make a mistake, I say so and don't cover up. That's been important. You don't have to win them all, and everyone knows you're not perfect. I want to lose 10 percent of the time. People need to feel that the board is in charge. You must give leadership to the board and staff. You must lose a few to the staff....

This superintendent's sophisticated style of operation made the question of distribution of influence over school operations moot indeed. He and others could point to the appearance of participation and influence of local and regional boards, teachers, and local school administrators. All had a chance to be involved and to appear influential. The superintendent was the chief competitor for each of the other school actors, depending on the issue. Yet his style was to avoid confrontations with political rivals and avoid conflict by playing regional forces against local ones and professionals against professionals. And he was successful, as he did not hesitate to admit, because of the dynamic view he took of power:

> I'm in the business of politics, not education. This is a political world. My strength, to the extent I have it, is nothing but politics. My strength is totally derived from the board and the people. The successful school superintendent is a successful politician. But there is no single model. Look at the variety of types of successful politicians there are.

Certainly, there was no single successful model to control of the school systems included in our mixed type. The seven field sites, however, appeared to define three control dimensions that extend beyond the regional/local dichotomy we have explored: The first involves Tannenbaum's caution regarding the amount of control: school organization ranges from a vacuum of control to the complete absorption of all pressures and forces. The southwestern Alaska school site where family politics operated suggests one end of this continuum, and the second and fifth field sites represent the other end.

A second control dimension, and also the most prevalent one, was territorial conflict between center/peripheral interests. All but the last of our field sites demonstrated aspects of this continuum.

The third and perhaps the most interesting control pattern was presented in the last two cases--cooperation and competition, without the appearance of conflict.

Unfortunately, we did not ask questions on our survey instruments that would enable us to test the extent of these dimensions within the mixed type. In the interests of consistency, however, we present below information on the climate of expectations in mixed schools and outcomes associated with this type.

Climate of Expectations

Perceptions of local administrators in mixed schools in 1981 differed slightly from those of respondents of other types with respect to college attendance.

Attitudes toward the achievement and learning climate of the school are more relevant to analysis of the mixed type, and there were differences among types as seen below.

Table 24. Principals' Perceptions of School Achievement (Mixed)

Evaluation	Mixed	Other
Better than average/among the best	23.0	39.4
About average	24.8	30.0
Below average/inferior	52.2	30.6
	N=79	N=170

$P < 0.0000$

Similar findings were noted for each of the climate variables.

A greater proportion of principals in mixed schools took negative views of the school climate than in any other type. Moreover, in most cases the relationship between type of school and climate variable remained significant after controlling for school size and ethnicity. The strongest associations, however, applied within small and large schools, and those with Caucasian majorities or both Caucasian and Native students.

The climate of expectations in schools is linked to instructional roles and orientations of teachers and administrators. However, when we compared the attitudes of teachers and principals of mixed schools to all other rural schools regarding their most and least important roles, we found few significant differences.

Mixed School Outcomes

Student Achievement and Adaptation

The test data we collected, and information gleaned in field site interviews, presented contrasting evidence on student achievement in mixed schools. Test scores of one of the schools were near the top of all rural schools in the state. Scores of another were three grade levels below the norm in elementary school and a grade further behind in secondary work. There was no patterning of data on student achievement that seemed related to the type. Data on absenteeism, dropouts, and vandalism also showed no significant differences from all other rural schools.

Community Perceptions

The community survey contained responses from residents in places with mixed schools, which are presented below:

Table 25. Community Attitudes Toward School Actors (Mixed)

School Actors	% agree	% disagree
Local Board		
...is doing a good job	42.9	7.1
...does what most parents want	50.0	21.4
...tries to do something about problems	85.7	0.0
Talk to local board members often (once a month/more)	46.4	14.3
Principal		
...is doing a good job	55.3	10.5
...keeps people informed about problems in the school	84.2	7.9
...does what most parents want	65.7	5.7
...tries to do something about problems in the school	86.8	0.0
Talk to principal often (once a month/more)	59.5	5.4
Teachers		
...are doing a good job	50.0	7.1
...are very concerned about children in the school	45.5	0.0
...tries to do something about problems in the school	70.4	0.0
Talk to teachers often (once a month/more)	51.9	14.8
...take part in community activities	58.8	20.6
Visit teachers at their home	25.0	16.7
Teachers visit me at my home	16.2	18.9
Regional Board		
...helps local board	56.8	37.8
...does what most parents want	30.6	22.2
Talk to regional board members often (once a month/more)	8.3	47.2
...tries to do something about problems in the school	63.9	0.0
Superintendent		
...helps local board	59.5	0.0
...keeps region informed about local	47.2	8.3
...does what most parents want	36.0	2.8
...tries to do something about problems in the school	57.1	0.0
Talk to superintendent about school often	11.1	58.3

N=38

Comparing these data with responses of residents in all other rural schools, we noted few differences in evaluations of local boards, principals, and teachers. However, evaluations of residents in mixed school communities were significantly more positive regarding the regional board and superintendent. The most favorable attitudes concerned the attempts of regional boards and superintendents to "do something about problems in the school."

Opinions of community residents in mixed school resembled those of residents in all other rural schools:

Table 26. Community Perceptions of School Programs (Mixed)

Subject Area	Good	Not Very Good
Teaching of Math	45.9	5.4
Teaching of Reading	40.5	8.1
Teaching of Native culture & language	27.8	36.1
Training children for lives in community	24.3	18.9
Training children for lives outside community	24.3	10.8

In none of these areas was there a significant difference between attitudes of parents in mixed school communities and other school communities.

The final measure reviewed general satisfaction and dissatisfactions of residents with school and school/community conditions:

Table 27. Community Perceptions of School and Community Conditions (Mixed)

Community Perceptions of...	% agree	% disagree
School calendar and schedule fit local needs	65.8	2.6
School is used for local activities	71.1	0.0
School has a good program in Native language & culture	26.3	44.7
Academic program is good	44.7	5.3
Teachers try to help the school and community	63.2	5.3
Parents support school & take part in school activities	42.1	23.7
Principal/superintendent help meet local goals	34.2	2.6
School board helps to meet local goals	55.3	5.3
Students try hard to do their best in school	39.5	15.8

Comparing these opinions with responses of residents in other rural schools, we noted little variance. There was greater satisfaction with the amount of community use of the school facility. And there was less satisfaction with nation programs. Also, there were significantly more favorable attitudes toward administrators. This latter difference relates tangentially to field site observations of cooperative patterns of school politics in some communities.

For several reasons, the survey data we collected do not illuminate very well the dynamics of action within mixed schools. Our focus has been on localized and regionalized schools, and questions to administrators, teachers, and community residents were directed at this dimension of influence. In one respect, however, the community survey responses point in the same direction as do comments from respondents in school sites: where the amount and distribution of control over schooling are unsettled, attitudes toward both boards and administrators are favorable.

CHAPTER 9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Rural Alaska is America's largest rural area and perhaps the most complex. There is extreme variety in land forms and climate, distribution of natural resources, and most important, people. A majority of those who live in rural Alaska are Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, and these Alaska Natives are distinctive from Caucasians and urban Americans generally in their social and cultural orientations and values.

The people of rural Alaska have been few in number since Western institutions became established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and they have lived in small villages isolated from urban centers. For there reasons as well as for considerations of cost, the tendency on the part of governments was to develop centralized modes of service delivery. The largest service provider in rural areas, even after Alaska statehood in 1959, was the federal government, and its programs were directed from Washington, D.C. As the territorial administration developed, and as state government expanded (and found revenue sources) to assume greater responsibility for rural areas, the centralized model of service delivery was followed.

Centralization of services and government programs was part of what some have called in retrospect a cycle of dependency in rural Alaska places. The organizational means to escape developed slowly and in response to national pressures and forces--the U.S. civil rights movement and the federal War on Poverty, which brought change to rural Alaska in the 1960s. The movement for Native self-determination began in the middle of this decade, based on regional associations of Natives who sought resolution of their land claims against the federal government. These groups federated on a statewide basis and, with the discovery of oil and gas at Prudhoe Bay in 1968 (on land claimed by Natives), they soon developed support for Congressional resolution of the issue, enacted in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. This act gave land and money to 12 new regional economic corporations and nearly 200 village corporations, thus bringing wealth and power to rural regions of the state. ANCSA set tha stage for broad-based change in rural society, including tensions and conflict between the state, its regions, and local communities.

Federal and state services for rural Alaskans, however, remained centralized, which frustrated goals for Native self-determination. After ANCSA, attention shifted to social conditions, including education, in rural areas of the state. At this time, national attention was directed at decentralization of government services and community control, and several U.S. cities were conducting experiments in the decentralization of municipal service bureaucracies, with the idea of bringing control "closer to the people."

More attention was devoted to educational centralization in rural Alaska than to any other government service after the passage of ANCSA, for education was the most visible service performed in rural areas and the most prevalent. The problems in rural schooling--that rural students did not leave school with the same abilities in reading, writing, and computation as did their urban peers, and that education was not relevant to the cultural distinctiveness or social conditions of rural places--became associated with centralization of education agencies--both the federal BIA school system and the Alaska State Operated School System.

In response to what might be called the second phase of the Native self-determination movement, the Alaska state legislature decentralized the state-controlled rural school system in 1975. Contemporaneously, the federal government decentralized administratively the operation of BIA schools. These state and federal policy choices were primarily a political response to Native demands for local control. They were based on the hypothesis that rural community control of education and direct involvement in the schooling process would satisfy the self-determination demands pressed by Native leaders. A minor theme was the improvement of rural schooling. The national literature on educational organization and change, although based on urban case studies, encouraged the belief that students and parents would become adapted to the schooling process, if it were subject to their control, and this would enhance achievement.

Our research objective was to study the implementation of these organizational changes in rural Alaska education. The broad questions we asked were: What patterns of control emerged after decentralization of rural schools occurred in the mid-1970s? What factors and conditions were responsible for the development of these patterns? What processes and outcomes were associated with each pattern of control?

We began by surveying local school administrators in all rural places in 1981. Based on their responses and other statewide data, we formulated four types of educational control:

1. "Localized" control--schools in which most operations were determined by a principal or principal teacher, in collaboration with a local educational committee or school board. Twenty percent of rural Alaska schools fell into this category.

2. "Regionalized" control--schools in which most operations were determined by the district superintendent, in collaboration with his office staff and a regional school board. Twenty percent of rural Alaska schools were of this type.

3. "Unified" control--small school districts having between one and three schools at one geographical location, in which operations

were controlled by both school and district office factors. Fifteen percent of rural Alaska schools fell into this category.

4. "Mixed" control--schools in which there was a vacuum of influence, those in whose operations most actors were involved, and schools that were mid-range between local and regional forms of control. Thirty-six percent of rural Alaska schools were of this last, broad type.

We then drew a 10 percent sample of rural schools, and selected 28 schools for more intensified, field analysis. Schools were selected randomly in rough proportion to the number in each type. During the 1981-82 school year, we conducted studies in each field site, interviewing key participants in school governance.

Comparison of Patterns of Control

We found significant differences among the three, relatively pure types of control (regionalized, localized, and unified schools) with respect to their social and political conditions, school governance processes, and their associated outcomes.

Social and Political Conditions

Environmental Influences. Each of the districts with regionalized schools in our sample had opportunities for incorporation of the regional social and political environment into district operations and those of local schools. In all sample sites but one, however, the district office was essentially insulated from regional and local pressures. Few regional social and political pressures penetrated into the schools.

There was considerable cultural variation across the schools and field sites that were localized. In these school communities, the local environment was represented on the board, and it influenced sharply the direction of schooling. Hiring of personnel and aspects of the school curriculum--for example, Native culture and language courses, and emphasis on basic academic instruction--were susceptible to board control.

Unified schools stood mid-way between regionalized and localized sites in regard to the enactment of the environment. Incorporation of environmental forces was more likely in small than large communities, and it was potentially more disruptive of school operations. In the larger schools, operation of school programs was relatively autonomous.

Administrative Staff Relationships. One unique administrative characteristic of regionalized schools was the use in district offices of an area principalship, which imposed an intermediate level between school principals (or principal teachers) and the district superintendent. A second characteristic of regionalized schools was the prevalence of personalistic styles of administration by superintendents. Their relationships with members of the district staff--principals, principal teachers, and some teachers--were primarily dyadic, and the set of these relationships composed a district clientage network. The system of administration was very sensitive to issues of political territoriality, but administrative coupling was quite loose. Individual classrooms in this system were no more tightly linked to the district office than were localized sites, because consistent regulations did not pervade the system. We found a high degree of stability in these district offices and high rates of turnover at the local level, related to personalism and/or uncertainty in the relationships between local administrators, teachers, and the district office. Teachers objected strongly to this system in most of the field sites, and complained that they did not know what district policy was. However, teachers felt they were in charge of the classroom and supported by the local community.

Localized schools, on the other hand, tended to be within school districts in which the superintendent believed strongly in local control and in which district policy supported it. The administrative system of localized schools was marked by looser coupling of school-level actors to the district office and staff, and a far stronger coupling of actors at the local level. Turnover of district superintendents and school board members was high. At the local level, however, principals and principal teacher turnover was relatively low. Teachers of localized schools had greater opportunity for participation in administrative processes and made fewer complaints about the district office.

Unified schools were most strongly influenced by superintendents. We found within these systems a pattern of personalism resembling that of regionalized schools, but turnover was very high--making the effect of style less relevant. School boards tended to defer to superintendents, too. Teachers, more numerous in the larger schools of the unified type, were organized collectively, and they were the most stable force within the schools. This type best represented the model of professional control of schooling.

School/Community Relations. In none of the regionalized schools was there a center of influence that competed with the district school board, district office, or superintendent. In several districts, community school committees had been eliminated when that became possible in 1979. In those districts retaining local boards, we found that their powers were carefully circumscribed. Local advisory boards (ASBs) were weak and inactive in most of these school sites, and there was a high degree of community apathy and disinterest concerning the school. We attributed this to several factors: lack of preparation for work on local educational committees, lack of power of the committees, and lack of social integration in the communities. The relationships of actors in regionally controlled schools were those of both conflict and avoidance. Conflict, when it occurred, did not take place in institutional settings, and its effects were very disruptive.

Local boards and advisory committees in localized schools, on the other hand, were strong, stable, and well-connected to the sources of influence in the community. Participation in board meetings and educational affairs appeared to be somewhat greater than in regionalized schools, but this depended on issues to an extent. Of equal importance was the role played by the principal or principal teacher in localized school communities. Principals of localized schools appeared to be involved in a double process of interpretation. They had developed an understanding of community goals and expectations, and they took these to be their central charge. They then interpreted the world of instructional norms and practices and the school programs in terms of community expectations. Secondly, they interpreted and defended this result to district office personnel, including the superintendent and the regional board, for the purpose of protecting the autonomy of their community schools. Another factor also appeared to be present--the feeling of community residents that the principal could influence the district staff and superintendent, which motivated them to express their desires to the principal. Thus, the principal teacher had an understanding of community expectations based on productive relations with the community. In most cases, localization of control was the product of community boards and principals. Their relationships were characterized by openness, support for local cultural values, the principal's non-aggressive style of school management, and his apolitical role in the community which led to acceptance and trust by the community.

Finally, in unified schools, district school boards tended to be relatively weak, and they failed to represent important groups in the communities, particularly Natives when they were a minority. None of the unified sites had building-level PTAs. The larger size of communities, however, made possible some special interest group influences.

School Governance Processes

Regionalized schools were subject to policy implemented from the district office. Staffing of schools, including selection of principal, teachers, and in some cases even support staff, did not involve systematic local input. District-wide curricula were in effect in most of the schools, and there was opposition to this from some community members. However, it did not appear to be the case that school programs and classroom instruction were directed in a lock-step fashion from the district office. The local school budget was centrally determined, as were school construction matters. Limited involvement in school governance processes seemed to describe the situation of principals, teachers, and community members in these school sites. They perceived that opportunities for participation were artificial, such as serving on essentially cosmetic advisory committees.

District policy had an impact on localized schools too, but there was evidence of substantially greater participation in critical school routines. Local boards and principals often interviewed candidates for teaching positions, and they were important forces in the evaluation of school personnel. Local boards and administrators were autonomous in their selection of school support staff. Curricular policy was subject to school site influences, and there tended to be great variation in the types of programs available in localized schools. Some emphasized Native culture and language courses, but there were also standard academic programs in many of these schools. A recent trend we observed was the lessened concern for bilingual education programs, especially in Native majority schools. Most localized schools had a collection of course topics or emphasis areas in local arts, crafts, and economic activity. Each of the localized schools had an amount of discretionary revenue that the board and administrator could use without district office supervision. In adapting school calendars, designing new additions or school buildings, and determining community use of the school, local boards and administrators were most influential.

In unified schools, professional control best described the condition of local school operations. Higher-level staff were subject to board influence, but principals and teachers were hired by superintendents. The curriculum was influenced by teachers, as was the school calendar. Superintendents had most influence over the school budget. The greater degree of teachers' influence was related to the greater number of teachers in unified schools and their longer tenure in the schools. However, the school programs did not incorporate local values or interests.

School Climate and Outcomes

Most of the measures we used to assess school outcomes were not rigorous. Yet there was agreement across data collected with different measures, which gives us some confidence in them. They showed significant differences across types in several areas.

Administrators in regionalized schools were somewhat more likely to expect that students would attend college than those in localized schools. They had more positive attitudes regarding the climate of teaching and learning of their schools than did administrators in any other type of school (with the exception of several areas of administrators of unified schools). Ethnicity and school size confounded these relationships to an extent, but did not erase them. Behavior problems at regionalized schools were few, and rates of absenteeism, dropouts, and vandalism were relatively low (which is a general condition in most rural schools). Parents and community members thought the quality of teaching math and reading in these schools was good, but they were generally dissatisfied with education specific to the community. The chief area of dissatisfaction was the Native culture and language programs, which were less likely to be a part of the school program.

The climate of expectations of localized schools, as reported by administrators and teachers, was less positive regarding college attendance and school achievement than in regionalized school, and few seniors went on to college. Partly this was attributable to the larger number of small, Native majority schools in this type than in the others. Students seemed adapted to these schools, though, and the absenteeism rates were the lowest of any type of rural school, which reflected on the positive atmosphere of the school in the community. Student behavior problems were also few at localized schools. Parents and community adults were particularly satisfied with Native culture and language programs at the localized schools. What surprised us was that they were also much more likely to think the "academic program is good" than were residents of regionalized school communities. Our field research did not find evidence that localized school programs were intrinsically better, and perhaps this perception of parents is attributable to their greater involvement and participation in school operations.

Administrators of unified schools were the most positive regarding the likelihood of college attendance by school youth; they also tended to evaluate the school's achievement and learning environment highly. Significantly, teachers in unified schools were of the opposite opinion. School actors were far more likely to emphasize college preparation as an important role and less likely to emphasize training in local culture. But, these differences are largely the consequence of ethnicity (more unified schools had Caucasian than Native majorities). Absenteeism, dropout and vandalism rates were higher in unified schools than in any other type. The unified school type also stood out from all other schools studied in the relatively high level of instances of behavior problems--alcohol and drug problems, use of abusive language, and in one of the sites, a physical attack on a teacher. These behavior differences, however, were more related to the size of the schools and their essentially urban character than to the type. Community residents were generally dissatisfied with school programs (except for math), and they were strongly dissatisfied with teacher performance and integration with the community. Community attitudes in general were not strongly supportive of education.

We have reviewed three different ways of organizing rural schools, two of which developed following decentralization of education in 1976. In each of the types there was a different relationship between the environment of the school community and the school itself, and the manner of incorporation (or lack thereof) seems strongly related to the style of school leadership and the relations among school actors at the building-level and within the school district. Local school operations varied across the three types, and in only one was there professional control. Finally, adaptation to the school and satisfaction with it varied. Our measures of satisfaction were not rigorous, but they suggest that the standing of school programs and actors, in the opinion of parents and community adults, is associated with the type of control over that school. Until ongoing longitudinal research is completed, however, it is not possible to establish the association between the different types of control and student outcomes.

Implications

Findings of surveys we conducted and from our field studies raised questions for future research on organizational control in rural Alaska education and in rural areas of the contiguous 48 states. These concern the locus of control of schools, the amount of control, state policymaking and implementation of organizational change in education, and public support for different types of control in schools.

The Focus of Control in Rural Education

Our primary focus has been on the localization of control. We defined this as a community board and local administrator working together to develop school programs and determine school routines. Such localized schools are only one-fourth of the total number of rural schools in Alaska, but they are the ultimate goal of the decentralization movement. Our field studies suggested that localization of control was dependent on several conditions, including:

- a stable local administrator who shares influence with the school board, has a positive orientation toward the local community, and a respect for community values;
- local boards or committees that represent major community interests, including factions;
- stability (low turnover) on the local board;
- a district superintendent who personally supports the ideology of local control;
- district policy specifying substantive, functional areas of school government in which local boards and administrators have deciding influence;
- district-level communication processes that are open.

The impact of these factors remains to be tested through longitudinal field research.

The Amount of Control in Rural Education

Slightly over one-third of the rural schools in Alaska had "mixed" forms of control. Initially, these schools were not emphasized in our research plan, with the exception of reference to the argumentation of Tannenbaum regarding amount of control. Field studies in these sites indicated several dimensions of control and aspects of the influence process that require further study. The first of these was measurement of variation in the amount of control in loosely coupled systems, and in particular the impact that a school's absorption of all available pressures and forces has on that school's operations and outcomes. In the sites we visited with such conditions, there was a far greater degree of teacher, administrator, and community dissatisfaction that seemed to be associated with higher turnover rates at the school. This seemed likely over time to have an adverse impact on student adaptation to the school and achievement.

The regional/local dimension of analysis concerns levels in school system organization, but many of our field sites demonstrated important problems related to territorial control at one level: interests of schools at the fringe competed with those of the center, particularly regarding curricular materials used in schools. Center/periphery relationships and conflicts are particularly troublesome in large states, such as Alaska, and they affect other areas of government service delivery--for example, road service, health care delivery, and police and fire services. This dimension concerns both amount and locus of control. Center-based service agencies are subject to a greater amount of influence than those at the periphery, and they are also likely to have greater influence over operations of the system as a whole. Thus, regional/local tension influences and is influenced by center/periphery conflict. However, we are likely to see this clearly only when decentralization policies are applied in geographically vast areas.

Finally, our focus on regional/local conflict has deemphasized competition between actors at the same level and across levels that does not result in conflict--where there is a strategy of conflict avoidance or a pattern of cooperation and competition.

State Policymaking and Organizational Change

Throughout this study we have observed that the way in which school decentralization was planned (through legislation) and implemented had a major impact on the types of control patterns that developed. Problems with the legislation included:

-- ambiguity regarding:

the objectives of decentralization (which were multiple), the level to which decentralization was to occur (the role of community boards), and the primary responsible agent or body for implementing this vast organizational change;

-- lack of time for the careful construction of what were entirely new school districts;

-- lack of participation by rural residents, including study of their views systematically, that would influence the design of the new system and the regulations developed to put it into effect.

Implementation problems included:

-- lack of expertise in the state administration and within districts to both establish new school systems and plan new schools and programs;

-- lack of training of administrators and teachers carried over from the centralized system;

- -- legislative inattention: the legislature failed to exercise its role as the assembly of the unorganized borough and monitor school district and school operations;

- -- insufficient training and preparation, at the community level, regarding powers and responsibilities of local boards;

- -- lack of an evaluation procedure, or any means of determining whether districts and schools were performing adequately;

- -- lack of state support in development of curriculum materials, facilities design and construction to assist new school districts in rural Alaska.

Citizen Participation and Patterns of Control

Our measures pointed out variation in popular reactions and responses to schools, districts, school actors, and programs, based on the type of school. These responses seemed related to different degrees of involvement and participation in the schooling process. Systematic research is now being undertaken on the interaction of participation opportunities and processes and different control systems. Included are analyses of the implementation of community participation policies (both district- and local-level), and the relationship between different degrees of community participation and educational outcomes under different situations of control.

APPENDIX

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Our strategy for data collection was multi-operational. It included survey research, field research, and nonreactive methods.

Survey Research

We administered three statewide surveys during the project, and two additional statewide surveys, launched in 1983 for a different project, produced data available for our use. The subjects of survey research covered the range of school actors: principals, teachers, superintendents, regional school board members, and local advisory board or committee members. Also, during field work we surveyed opinions of community residents.

1. The Principal Survey (1981)

The first survey was designed to provide essential baseline data on local school operations from the persons we thought most knowledgeable. The questionnaire had sections on school calendar and daily school schedule, community use of the school facility, the school's social environment and climate of expectations, school governance, school personnel and student data, and questions on the principal's background. We pretested it with educational researchers, rural school principals and teachers, and rural district superintendents. Approximately 30 individuals helped us perfect the instrument by reviewing it.

Our respondents were all rural Alaska building principals, drawn from the state DOE's education directory. In those cases where a community had two or more school sites, we called the district office to determine if administration were consolidated, and if it were we surveyed only one principal. Our initial universe was the 315 principals and principal teachers of elementary and secondary rural schools statewide, excluding only principals in the urban districts of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, and the urban boroughs of Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Matanuska-Susitna. We later increased the universe by including peripheral schools more rural than urban in Alaska's boroughs, and eliminated some large communities. The final universe totalled 326 principals.

We began administration of the survey in March 1981. The process of administration followed the techniques recommended by Dillman in his Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978). We sent each principal a questionnaire and an individualized cover letter that explained the purposes of our study and requested assistance. As an incentive to complete the questionnaire, we offered each principal a free book for the school library, to be selected from a list of twelve studies on rural Alaska published recently.

Before we wrote principals, we notified superintendents of all rural school districts that we would be administering a survey, and we asked for their comments on the design of the study. At the time of administration, we wrote each district superintendent again. We sent a copy of the survey and asked for their support and assistance.

Two weeks after the first mailing, we sent all principals a follow-up post card, thanking the respondents and asking those who had not returned surveys to complete and return them. Then, one month after our first mailing, we sent non-respondents a second copy of the survey with an individualized letter.

My mid-May we had received responses from 83 percent of the principals in our universe of schools. We then telephoned those schools from which we had not heard, and asked administrators to complete surveys. In those cases where respondents seemed unwilling to complete the survey, we asked them to answer all survey questions except the scaled items over the phone.

This effort further stimulated mail responses from 5 percent of the schools in the universe, and we conducted telephone interviews with 8 percent of all administrators. Our total final rate of response was 96 percent. The schools from which we lack survey data include three which we added to the study after discovering they had been omitted from the state educational directory or because on reflection they seemed more rural than urban. The remaining non-respondents included one refusal and eight principals whom we were not able to contact--either because schools had closed or because the telephone system in that community was not operative. We attribute this very high rate of response to the careful application of techniques recommended in the Dillman study, use of an incentive, and our persistent follow-though. We coded the surveys using a standard checking procedure, and then added to coding sheets data collected from other sources (described below).

2. The Teacher Survey (1982)

We developed this survey to collect data from all rural schools that would reflect the perspective of teachers. The idea was that data from teachers would balance information obtained from the principal survey and help establish the statewide context in which our field interviews with teachers would be interpreted.

The instrument was prepared in consultation with education researchers, school administrators and teachers with experience in rural Alaska education. It contained the same scales of items on school social climate and school governance we had used on the principal survey. In addition, we asked questions about teacher-community relations, teachers' use of instructional practices, background information on teachers, and a long set of items on teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction with school and community conditions. Drafts of this questionnaire were circulated to a large number of reviewers for comments, and we pretested it with approximately 25 teachers of rural schools before we launched the survey.

We selected randomly one teacher in each rural school, based on the listing of teachers in the 1982 educational directory. We employed two methods of administering the survey. For those schools included in our field research sample, we distributed the survey to teachers personally and collected the completed survey from them. There were no refusals.

For the 292 rural schools not included in the field research sample, we administered the teacher survey via the mail. The procedure we used followed exactly that of the principals' survey, to wit: mailing the survey and a return envelope with an individual letter to each respondent; a follow-up post card; a second mailing to non-respondents one month after the initial request; and a third mailing two months after the first to the 46 teachers who had not yet responded. Telephone calls to teachers produced responses which pushed the response rate up to 96 percent.

Of the 13 teachers who did not respond to the teachers survey, two refused outright, two individuals had left teaching positions in mid-year; four had left school for the summer by the time telephone contact was made; and five teachers promised to respond but did not.

We developed a codebook from the survey, and checked coder reliability, particularly on open-ended questions, through standard procedures. We also added to this data file information on the school--the teacher turnover rate, and the size and ethnicity of the school student population.

3. The Superintendent Survey (1982).

For the 15 school districts in our sample of schools, we had extensive interviews with district superintendents, covering most topic areas of the principal and teacher surveys. We expanded our pool of knowledge on superintendents by administering a third survey in early 1982. Then in summer 1982, we interviewed superintendents of large rural districts not part of our sample. We adopted no follow-up measures because of the press of other research, but this effort yielded a response rate of two-thirds of all rural school superintendents.

4. The Community Survey (1982).

As part of our field instruments, we included a survey of perceptions of residents of the community (who were not employees of the school or board members). The purpose was to establish a community frame of reference toward schooling, by asking questions systematically. This survey included questions on respondents' perceptions of principals, superintendents, teachers, regional and local board members, respondents' evaluations of school and community programs, and questions concerning satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the school and school-community relations.

We pretested this survey in our two pretest sites in late 1981, and administered it in each sample site to between seven and 15 adults. We did not select respondents randomly, for this procedure could not be accomplished during very brief visits to the field sites. Thus, our sample of respondents was one of convenience. A total of 223 surveys were distributed and completed during the field work state of the project (there were no refusals).

5. Resurvey of Principals and Teachers (1983)

Survey and field research indicated several areas of questions that might be important to our study. These questions fitted directly in a related research project on "The Impact of Citizen Participation in Rural Alaska Education," funded by the Alaska Council on Science and Technology (ACST). (Investigators for this project are McBeath, Shepro, and Strong.) Thus, in early 1983 we returned to principals and teachers questioned in 1981 and 1982, asking a short list of questions on indicators of professionalism, responsiveness, and involvement in community activities. To the present, 72 percent of these original respondents have completed surveys, and preliminary analyses of several items are included in the report.

6. School Board Survey (1983)

A central concern of the ACST project is board member perceptions, roles and activities, and to measure these we administered another mail survey in March 1983. Our universe included all regional school board members and a sample of one local board or parent committee member for each rural community. Questions focused on board members' perceptions of influence over schooling, community satisfaction, baseline information on board member recruitment and training, and respondents' perceptions of organizational relationships in their communities.

Again, we followed the procedure outlined by Dillman, used an incentive, and have been persistent. Response rate to the present is 61 percent. Some of the data have influenced the interpretations in the report.

In short, over a three year period we have administered five statewide surveys of rural school actors (and one survey to residents in sample sites). These studies were done at different points in time, and this admits the possibility of some bias into the results, given the relatively high turnover rate among school actors and the changing kaleidoscope of forces in rural Alaska society. Compensating for this source of error is the development of some longitudinality through the resurvey of educators.

In total, our surveys have reached over 1,600 different individuals involved in local school operations and politics--roughly

10 percent of all professional personnel and lay board members in rural Alaska. More important than this success in reaching numbers of individuals has been the quality of the data we have received. Item response rate exceeds 90 percent, and our invitation to respondents to cover the margins of surveys with comments has been responded to enthusiastically.

Field Research

Objectives of field research were to assess the degree and range in actual implementation of different control types in rural Alaska school operations; to examine the relationship between type of control and district policy (including superintendent's style, board/superintendent relations, such as delegation of authority, and staff/board orientations to organizational change); to ascertain the relationship between different types of control and selected student outcome measures; and to examine the intervening influence of school social climate among other factors.

Instruments

We developed interview schedules for principals, district staff members (including superintendents), and board members. These were essentially outlines that covered topic areas, and served as stimuli to questions asked by interviewers in the field setting. The topic areas included: the actor's action and influence on school operations in the areas of hiring all relevant school actors, school calendar, curriculum, finance, facilities, maintenance, student achievement and behavior; role conflict and consensus; administrative/board relations, school/administration relations and politics, local/regional and regional/state relations and politics; board meetings and elections; communications and evaluations of local control.

Pretesting

We circulated the package of instruments (including drafts of the teacher and community surveys) to educational actors and researchers, and in early December 1981, took the instruments into two field sites for pretests. One of the sites was a school in western Alaska with a majority Native enrollment. The second site was a school on the Alaska road system, with a majority Caucasian enrollment. In both sites, instruments were used with district superintendents and other members of the district staff; school principals; school teachers; all members of the local school committees and available members of the regional school board; and several adults in the communities who were not formally affiliated with the school system. A total of 40 individuals were contacted in the two field sites.

We also received detailed responses to the instruments from ten educational researchers in the state, including members of the Alaska Native Education Association, state Department of Education, school superintendents who have advised us (but whose districts are not included in the sample), and university faculty involved in rural teacher education.

We then revised the field instruments based on what we had learned. First, we developed a short interview for teachers, concerning matters of school governance and processes, relations with boards, community, and school administration. Second, we shortened the length of the community survey and simplified the language level. Third, we loosened the structure of the interview guide for school administrators, and added several areas omitted in the draft.

Field Work. From December 1981 through May 1982, three of us (McDiarmid, Shepro, and McBeath)conducted brief field visits to each of the 28 sample sites and to all district school headquarters of these schools (requiring 9 additional site visits). Our strategy in each case was to inform the building principal or district superintendent in advance of our visit to the site, explaining the purpose of the study and the nature of our questions. We then traveled to the communities by car, snowmachine, chartered small airplane, or commercial aircraft.

We had no difficulty developing access into these communities, or completing work within them in a reasonably short period of time. (Length of visit varied primarily by size of community. It was possible to finish work in the tiny communities in under three days; the larger communities required sometimes a full week.) The problems we had in field work were largely unrelated to our research objectives. They included: in the study of road system communities, temperatures between -50° and -70° Fahrenheit; in southeast Alaska and the Aleutians, unseasonably heavy rain, fog, and snowfalls which brought about closure of airports and resulted in unplanned extended stays in the communities of nearly one week; in western Alaska and the Bering Straits region, heavy snowfalls and the start of subsistence cycles in sealing.

During this six-month period, we contacted over 300 individuals, conducting informant interviews with them. Field notes and observations were prepared into complete transcripts, which we have used in describing the types of schools.

Informant Interviews with Local Government Actors As part of a different project on local government organization, policies, and change in rural Alaska, we had the opportunity to visit ten regional centers of rural Alaska from July through August 1982. These visits provided an opportunity to do some mopping up, meeting school actors missed during site visits. More important, they gave us an opportunity to expand knowledge of attitudes and orientations of local political influentials--members of city and borough councils and staffs, mayors, directors of ANCSA village and regional corporations, nonprofit associations, and traditional village councils. A total of 70 individuals were interviewed (by McBeath) during this period.

In summary, the field research stage brought us into contact with local school conditions on a first-hand basis. We were able to add qualitative information, and add body and spirit to the relatively thin attitudinal and perceptual data collected in survey research.

The shortcomings of field research were three: a very brief amount of time was spent in each of the sample sites, which made it possible to do little more than take a snapshot of school conditions. Observation of classroom was done informally, and meetings were observed only when they coincided with the times of our visits. Second, three individuals did field site interviewing, and all were male Caucasians. Thus, there was variation in the interpretation of conditions, but perhaps a systematic bias in interpretation of encounters with Alaska Natives. Third, the interview guide directed questions, but their format varied from interviewer to interviewer. Because the procedure we used was not quantitative and lacked scientific reliability, it was possible to aggregate most responses across all actors in a site only for a few items (regarding perceptions of influence by actors). It is for these reasons, that we have limited use of the field data to two forms--to provide information about the operations of processes from key informants, and to illustrate patterns established through survey research on a statewide basis.

Non-Reactive Measures

During our three year-study, we collected a variety of existing data, both statewide and specific to the districts and schools in our sample.

School Board Minutes

We attempted to collect school board minutes from 1976 to the present for each rural district in the state, and were successful in establishing complete files for 22 of 49 districts. Our intent was to code these minutes for content regarding such topics as superintendent/board conflict, attention devoted to staffing, curriculum, and finance concerns, community input into school board deliberations, and similar topics.

Initially, we were unsure of the "average yield" of minutes regarding the variables of our study, and thus we conducted a pretest of two versions of a coding scheme. The first version, a comprehensive survey of participation on each motion, report, or discussion at a sample of meetings, indicated the variety of participation and activity modes. However, in a large number of cases--approaching 50 percent of the districts--participants were not identified in the minutes. The second version, an analysis of topics covered at meetings, was less influenced by the differences in reporting practices across the districts, but of course it produced little information about the behavior of district school board participants.

On the basis of the pretest and evaluation, we designed a coding scheme that represented aspects of both topic and participant analysis, but was weighed more heavily toward the former than the latter. We conducted a reliability test of this instrument, with two aides coding independently, and after repeated revisions and adjustments of the coding scheme were able to develop reliability near

80 percent. But the effort had told us something about the reliability of minutes and the vast resources needed to treat minutes systematically. At this point, we discontinued further attempts at content analysis of school board minutes. However, we used board minutes to establish a regional policy background for each of the school sites in which we did research. We also collected local board minutes from each sample site in which they were available.

Aggregate Data

State and federal records and file data were important additions to our knowledge of rural school conditions. We collected state Department of Education Reports on enrollment, dropouts, and absenteeism, to the school building level (and from the federal BIA for those schools). We computed teacher turnover data from state records and listings in the state's educational directory. We developed information on community income from a variety of sources: Title I (low income family) data, from the state Department of Education; revenue sharing data, from the State Department of Community & Regional Affairs; and welfare transfer payment data, from the state Department of Health and Social Services. We also tabulated data on each community regarding its natural resources. Many of these materials were added to our principal survey data file, and were used as environmental controls in the analyses of those data.

In each of the school sites and district school headquarters, we sought test scores. We were successful in obtaining scores for 24 of the 28 sites, and have used them briefly in the analysis. The difficulty with use of test scores is that: 1) several different tests are used by Alaska school districts, 2) there are idiosyncracies in reporting, and 3) the number of students taking tests in rural sites is so small that results are very subject to error. Statewide assessment test results are aggregated at the level of geographic regions, and permit no inter-school or inter-district comparisons.

Table 28. Rural Principals' Perceptions of the Influence of Selected Actors* on School Operations

	Principal	Teacher	Local Board	Sup't	Dist. Board
1. Hiring principals, teachers**	10	--	11	68	8
2. Hiring other school personnel	56	1	18	21	3
3. Deciding how school budget will be spent	46	3	6	35	10
4. Approving textbooks for the school	43	27	5	11	11
5. Deciding on school calendar	21	5	28	16	13
6. Deciding on new courses/programs	41	19	10	15	12
7. Deciding on acceptable student behavior	56	18	13	3	6
8. Deciding on community use of facilities	42	1	26	13	12

*Students, parents/community, and district staff are excluded from the table, for in no case did 5 percent or more of the principals regard them as having most influence. For this reason, row totals do not equal 100 percent.

**Our mistake was to group principals and teachers. Data collected in field research lead us to suspect that in the opinion of principals, they are also the most influential participants in the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Table 29. Rural Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of Selected Actors* on School Operations

	Principal	Teachers	Board	Sup't	Board
1. Hiring principal, teachers**	9	--	5	65	10
2. Hiring other school personnel	46	1	16	26	4
3. Deciding how school budget will be spent	45	4	3	30	14
4. Approving textbooks for the school	26	41	2	12	11
5. Deciding on school calendar	35	9	17	13	18
6. Deciding on new courses/programs	39	21	5	15	12
7. Deciding on acceptable student behavior	45	32	9	3	4
8. Deciding on community use of facilities	46	4	22	11	8

Responses are drawn from the teacher survey, 1982, N=305.

*Students, parents/community, and district staff are excluded from the table. In one functional area (influence over hiring principals and teachers), 7 percent of the respondent thought district staff were most influential. In all other functional areas, less than 5 percent of the respondents regarded these other actors as having most influence. Because we have excluded them, row totals do not equal 100 percent.

**Our mistake was to group principals and teachers. Data collected in field research lead us to suspect that in the opinion of principals, they are also the most influential participants in the recruitment and retention of teachers, a point on which teachers appeared to be in agreement.

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